

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

June 17, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Chairman Genachowski:

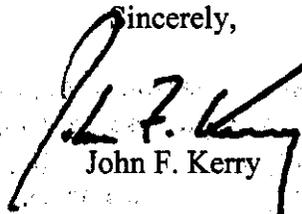
As the Federal Communications Commission considers the compensation rate for Video Relay Service (VRS) providers, I write to stress the value of this service to the deaf community. As you know, just as the non-deaf community uses telephones to connect with people across distances, VRS allows citizens who are deaf to communicate in American Sign Language with people around the world.

Through a video feed with a middle-man interpreter translating the conversation by phone to the destination party, and vice versa, VRS serves an indispensable purpose by providing the capability for deaf people to call and receive calls from friends, family, co-workers, and emergency services. Additionally, Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires the FCC to promote efficiency, technology, access, and functional equivalence for the deaf. VRS is an incredibly effective means toward those ends, and today, over 100,000 deaf Americans rely on this service in their daily lives.

For these reasons, it is essential that a fair and reasonable compensation rate be established for service providers. I understand that the current rate expires July 1 of this year, and the National Exchange Carrier Association has recommended significant rate cuts for the larger VRS providers. Some are concerned that the proposed rate may not cover the actual costs of providing a quality VRS connection, and as a result may lead to reduced service options and longer wait times for users. As you consider public comments on this issue and seek to combat fraudulent claims in the VRS industry, I urge you to adopt a VRS rate that appropriately meets the needs of the deaf community.

Thank you for your continued careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,


John F. Kerry

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