

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 2010

Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

0873

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker,

We are writing to express our concern about the Commission's recent proposal to make significant changes to the Video Relay Service (VRS) compensation process. As you know, VRS enables Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to make routine and emergency calls using their own language. The Americans with Disabilities Act directs the Commission to ensure that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals have access to "functionally equivalent" telecommunications services nationwide. Our constituents who use American Sign Language have indicated that VRS is the most functionally equivalent service available.

We note with concern that the Commission intends to shift from the long-term compensation method it adopted unanimously to a "cost plus" method which may not account for the real costs of providing VRS. It is also troubling that the proposed compensation rate structure could result in certain VRS providers being paid as much as 50% more than others for the same service.

Before the Commission implements these proposed rate changes, including on an interim basis, we ask that you provide to Congress the reasons for these decisions, which may have severe and unintended impacts on the deaf community. We are aware that the VRS compensation program has suffered from a number of instances of alleged fraud, and we urge the Commission to step up its efforts to address fraud. We do not see a connection, however, between fraud issues and the rate structure. If the Commission does see a connection, we would be interested to hear how the Commission believes the proposed rate changes address that problem.

We hope to work with you to understand the most effective ways to promote efficiency, improved technology, nationwide access and functional equivalence for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. We believe a rate structure that is fair and predictable will encourage innovation and advancement. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

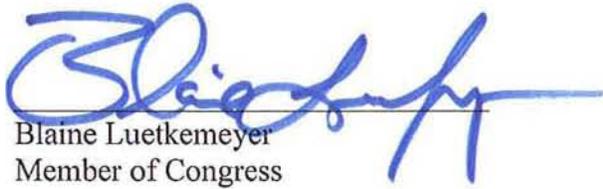
Sincerely,



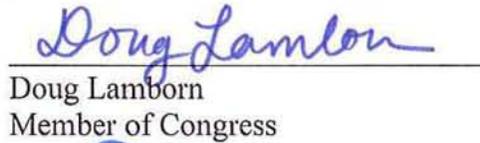
Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

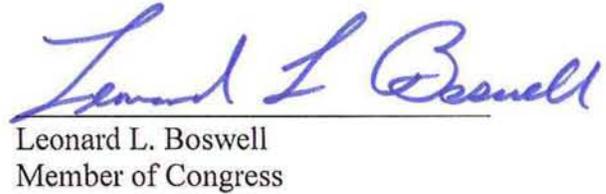


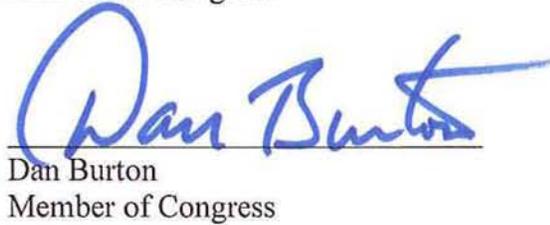
Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress

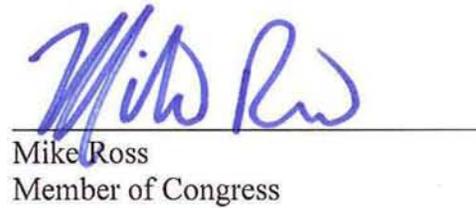

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress


Martin Heinrich
Member of Congress

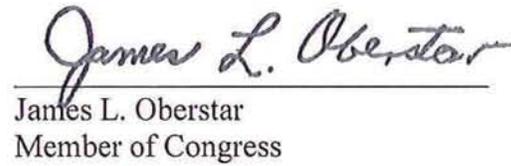

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress


Leonard L. Boswell
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Dan Burton
Member of Congress


Mike Ross
Member of Congress


Roy Blunt
Member of Congress


James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress

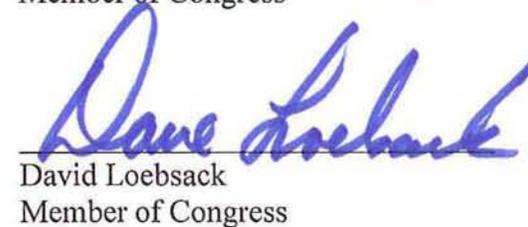

Erik Paulsen
Member of Congress


Bruce L. Braley
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Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

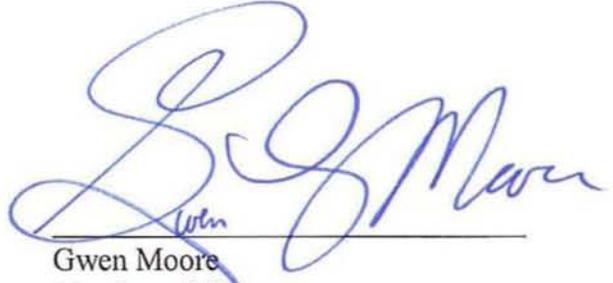

Wm. Lacy Clay
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Steve King
Member of Congress


David Loebsack
Member of Congress



Michele Bachmann
Member of Congress



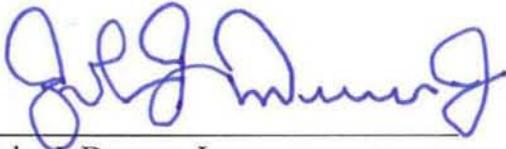
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



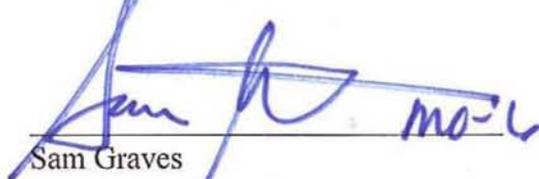
John Kline
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Betty Sutton
Member of Congress



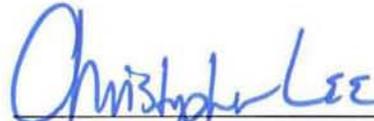
John J. Duncan, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sam Graves
Member of Congress



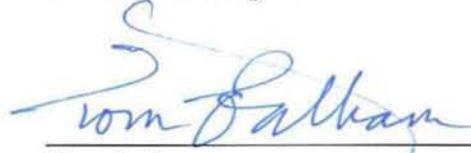
W. Todd Akin
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Christopher J. Lee
Member of Congress



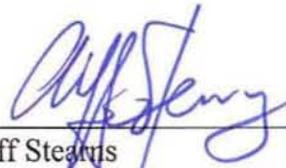
Jo Ann Emerson
Member of Congress



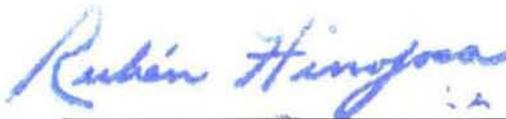
Tom Latham
Member of Congress



Vernon J. Ehlers
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Cliff Stearns
Member of Congress



Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress