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For Immediate Release

**FCC CLEARS PATH FOR TRANSITION
FROM TTY TECHNOLOGY TO REAL-TIME TEXT**
Commission Moves Toward Modernizing Wireless Phone Text Compatibility

WASHINGTON, December 15, 2016 – The Federal Communications Commission today amended its rules to allow phone companies to replace support for an outdated form of text telephone communications, known as TTY, with support for real-time text, to provide reliable telephone communications for Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who have a speech disability.

As the nation’s communications networks migrate to IP-based environments, real-time text technology will allow Americans with disabilities to use the same wireless communications devices as their friends, relatives and colleagues, and more seamlessly integrate into tomorrow’s communications networks. Under FCC rules, phone companies and manufacturers are required to support accessible text communications services, which for years have taken the form of TTY services. Under the new rules, carriers and manufacturers will be allowed to use the more advanced and interoperable real-time text technology to meet this obligation.

Real-time text allows characters to be sent as they are created without hitting “send.” This allows text to be sent at the same time as voice communications, permitting a more conversation-friendly service. In addition, by not requiring users to hit “send,” 911 call center personnel, for example, will be able to receive even incomplete messages from people in need. Real-time text enables the full integration of people with disabilities into IP communications networks as they become widely available. It allows consumers using text communications to interact directly with consumers on voice phones, and vice versa. This technology will also be able to function in off-the-shelf devices like common smartphones. This will eliminate the need for consumers with disabilities to purchase expensive and often hard-to-find specialized text devices.

The order adopted today allows companies to transition to real-time text as a replacement for TTY services. The Commission has already granted various wireless carriers’ waiver requests of the Commission’s requirements to support TTY technology as they committed to developing and deploying real-time text services on their wireless IP networks. They and other stakeholders generally agree on the technical feasibility of real-time text, as well as its superior reliability, efficiency, character sets, features and speed over TTY.

This order responds to AT&T’s petition asking the FCC to initiate a rulemaking that would authorize the industry-wide substitution of real-time text for TTY technology to meet accessibility requirements on wireless networks. To fulfill this requirement, real-time text

services must be both compatible with existing TTY services and interoperable with real-time text applications on other networks. The Commission also adopted a notice asking questions about next steps in the process of integrating these services into telecommunications relay services and the need for certain RTT features for people with cognitive disabilities and who are deaf-blind.

For more information about the FCC's Disability Rights Office, visit:

<https://www.fcc.gov/general/disability-rights-office>.

Action by the Commission December 15, 2016 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 16-169). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly approving and issuing separate statements.

CG Docket No. 16-145; GN Docket No. 15-178

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).