



Hearing Loss Association of America

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HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA APPLAUDS THE FCC FOR ITS DECISION TO APPROVE INTERNET CAPTIONED TELEPHONE FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS

Washington, D.C., December 20, 2006: In October 2005 the Hearing Loss Association of America petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to include Internet-enabled captioned telephone for reimbursement from the telecommunications relay fund. This petition was supported by more than 30 other organizations who support full telecommunications access for people with hearing loss. Today that petition was approved, bringing captioned telephone into the broadband world.

In 2006 the Hearing Loss Association together with other advocates and industry professionals held many meetings with FCC Commissioners, Chairman Kevin J. Martin, and FCC staff to demonstrate and discuss the benefits of captioned telephone for a significant group of Americans with hearing loss who up to now have been underserved by existing relay services.

Brenda Battat, associate executive director of Hearing Loss Association commented: "We are delighted that the FCC listened and took a great leap forward by approving Internet Protocol captioned telephone. IP telephone captioning gives the most transparent, flexible and portable telecommunications service for those people with hearing loss who use their residual hearing and use spoken language. This is indeed a great way to finish up the year and gives us hope for other work that needs to be done in 2007."

Terry Portis, Ed.D., executive director of the Hearing Loss Association stated: "The vast majority of people with hearing loss in our country need communication choices that maximize residual hearing through technology or visual cues. This technology has the potential to be the most utilized relay service in the United States. We are thrilled that the FCC demonstrated their support for technology advances to improve communications access for people with hearing loss."

Statement from the FCC

The Commission adopted a Declaratory Ruling finding that Internet Protocol (IP) captioned telephone service (IP CTS) is a type of telecommunications relay service (TRS) eligible for

compensation from the Interstate TRS Fund (Fund). Chairman Kevin J. Martin stated: “Today we take another step to help improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. By finding that Internet Protocol (IP) captioned telephone relay service is eligible for reimbursement from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund, we make progress in fulfilling our statutory goal of ensuring that every person has equal access to this nation's communications services.”

Internet captioned telephone will benefit consumers by giving them the flexibility of using a computer, PDA, or wireless device to make a call, without having to purchase special telephone equipment. It will be particularly helpful in the workplace.

In addition, captions provided on a computer screen can accommodate a much wider group of individuals, including persons with low vision, because they can take advantage of the large text, variable fonts, and variable colors that are available.

For more information go to www.fcc.gov or email media contact Rosemary Kimball at rosemary.Kimball@fcc.gov

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The Hearing Loss Association of America is the nations’ largest membership and advocacy organization for people with hearing loss. Founded in 1979, the Hearing Loss Association of America opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy and support. It publishes the bimonthly *Hearing Loss Magazine* and its website is www.hearingloss.org.