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RM-8658

Federal Communications Commission
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2000 NOV -6 A 9:45

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DA 00-2402
Released: October 25, 2000

WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU SEEKS COMMENT ON REQUEST TO RE-OPEN THE PETITION FOR RULE MAKING REGARDING HEARING AID-COMPATIBLE TELEPHONES

Comments Due: December 8, 2000

Reply Comments Due: January 8, 2001

On October 7, 2000, the Wireless Access Coalition (WAC) formally requested that the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) re-open the Petition for Rule Making in the Matter of Section 68.4 (a) of the Commission's Rules, Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones. Originally filed in 1995 by the HEAR-IT NOW Coalition (Coalition), the Petition asked that the exemption for PCS devices from the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988 (HAC Act)[1] be revoked. In response to the Petition, then-Chairman Reed Hundt directed that wireless manufacturers coordinate with affected consumers, hearing health professionals and hearing aid manufacturers in order to find a solution. As a result, the Hearing Aid Compatibility and Accessibility to Digital Wireless Telecommunications summit was convened in January 1996. A steering committee and three working groups were formed, which continued to meet regularly to work and to report to the Commission on short and long term solutions.

A number of other initiatives resulted from the filing of the original Petition, as noted by WAC in its October 7, 2000 request. WAC states, however, that the lack of hearing aid compatibility with and interference from digital wireless telephones is still an ongoing problem. WAC expresses concern that as fast-paced progress continues in the digital world, the needs of hearing aid and cochlear implant users are being forgotten. Further, WAC points out that despite the promulgation of section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996[2], hearing aid users continue to have little or no access to digital wireless phones. WAC requests that the Commission take action to make digital wireless phone accessible to hearing aid users as quickly as possible.

This is a "permit but disclose" proceeding pursuant to §1.1206 of the Commission's Rules.[3] Presentations to or from Commission decision-making personnel are permissible provided that *ex parte*

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[1] 47 U.S.C. § 610(a). The HAC Act required nearly all new telephones to be hearing aid compatible, but allowed the Commission to exempt certain categories of telephones, including those used with public mobile services and private radio services from the HAC mandate. The Act directed the Commission to periodically review these exemptions.

[2] 47 U.S.C. § 255.

[3] 47 C.F.R. §1.1206.

presentations are disclosed pursuant to 47 C.F.R. §1.1206(b).

Parties interested in filing comments may do so on or before **December 8, 2000** and Reply Comments are due on or before **January 8, 2001**. All comments shall reference the RM number of this proceeding. Comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFC) or by filing paper copies. Comments filed through the ECFS can be sent as an electronic file via the Internet to http://www.fcc/gov/e-file/ecfc.html. In completing the transmittal screen, commenters should include their full name, postal service mailing address, and the RM of this proceeding. Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and four copies with the Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., TW-A325, Washington, D.C. 20554 and a diskette copy with the Commission's copy contractor, International Transcription Service, Inc. (ITS), Room CY-B400, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington D.C. 20554. In addition, parties should submit one copy to E. Wendy Austrie, Policy Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, Room 3-B101, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Copies of the WAC Letter to Re-open Petition Concerning Hearing Aid Access may be obtained from the Office of the Secretary by referencing RM 8658. Comments and Reply Comments will be available for public inspection during regular business hours in the FCC Reference Information Center, Room CY-A257, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

For further information concerning this proceeding, contact E. Wendy Austrie, Policy Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau at (202) 418-1310 (voice), or (202) 418-7233 (TTY).

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