Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

February 2014

View our profile on LinkedInFollow us on TwitterLike us on Facebook

# Overview

In February, U.S. Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Mark Takano (D-CA) and Steve Stockman (R-TX) introduced a new bill, the ***Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act*** [H.R. 4040], to enhance education for students with sensory disabilities. The bill would ensure children who are blind, have low vision or are deaf or hard of hearing are provided with proper evaluation of their educational needs and qualified teachers to meet those needs.

In regulatory news, the FCC is accepting nominations for the third annual Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman’s AAA) and will be hosting a former Chairman’s AAA winner, Dr. Juan E. Gilbert, who will discuss “Innovation in Voting Accessibility” in the latest Accessibility and Innovation Speaker Series. Additionally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is now seeking applicants to serve on the National Advisory Council (NAC). NAC members serve for three years and provide direct council to the FEMA Administrator. Lastly, the Department of Transportation (DOT) released the first chapters for a proposed circular meant to offer guidance to transportation providers regarding Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. The released chapters are the first of a series of twelve, and the DOT is currently seeking comment on the scope and content of the chapters.

Click the headings below to link directly to a particular section.

Legislative Activities

Regulatory Activities

Other Items of Interest

Publications and Reports

Wireless RERC Updates

Upcoming Events

# Legislative Activities

## Legislation Introduced To Improve Education for Students with Sensory Disabilities

February 14, 2014 — U.S. Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Mark Takano (D-CA) and Steve Stockman (R-TX) introduced the ***Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act*** [H.R. 4040], a new bill to enhance education for students who are blind or have low vision or are deaf or are hard of hearing. The bill would amend the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) by mandating the proper evaluation of children who are blind, have low vision or are deaf or hard of hearing and their educational needs. Accordingly, the bill would work to ensure that all States provide qualified teachers to meet each child’s needs. The bill is named in honor of Anne Sullivan Macy (Helen Keller’s teacher) and Alice Cogswell (the first female to be educated in a school for the deaf in the United States). Regarding the bill, Vice President of Programs and Policy at the American Federation of the Blind, Paul Schroeder, noted, "Right now, our schools are not prepared to help children who are visually impaired or hearing impaired develop to their fullest potential, and we are determined to change that. H.R. 4040 would provide vital resources and establish requirements to help students with visual or hearing impairments excel in the classroom, at home, and in their communities."

#### Additional Information

[AFB Press Release](http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/press-room/landmark-legislation-to-provide-improved-education-for-students-with-visual-and-hearing-impairments-introduced-into-us-house--/125)

[<http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/press-room/landmark-legislation-to-provide-improved-education-for-students-with-visual-and-hearing-impairments-introduced-into-us-house--/125>]

# Regulatory Activities

## FCC Seeks Nominations for Awards for Advancements in Accessibility

February 12, 2014 — The FCC has begun accepting nominations for the third annual Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman’s AAA). The awards are designed to “honor outstanding private and public sector ventures that advance accessibility for people with disabilities.” Nominations may be made for mainstream or assistive technologies, standards or best practices in the following areas:

* Advanced Communications Services
* Employment Opportunities
* Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
* Mobile Web Browsers
* Social Media
* Closed Captions
* Video Description

Nominations are due on March 31, 2014 and can be sent to [charimansAAA@fcc.gov](mailto:charimansAAA@fcc.gov). Winners will be honored at a ceremony to be held in June 2014.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Press Release](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0212/DOC-325592A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0212/DOC-325592A1.pdf>]

## FCC Speaker Series to Address Accessibility in Voting

February 12, 2014 — The FCC will host Dr. Juan E. Gilbert, Chair of the Human-Centered Computing Division at Clemson University, as the latest speaker for the Accessibility and Innovation Speaker Series. Dr. Gilbert, a winner of the Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility, will present on “Innovation in Voting Accessibility” and discuss Prime III, “a secure, multimodal electronic voting system developed by his lab.” The presentation will be held on March 11, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. in the FCC Commission Meeting Room and will be followed by an accessible technology demonstration. For those unable to attend, the session will be streamed live at FCC.gov/live.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Press Release](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0212/DOC-325600A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0212/DOC-325600A1.pdf>]

## FEMA Now Accepting Applications for National Advisory Council

February 18, 2014 — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is now seeking applicants to serve on the National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC, composed of 35 subject matter experts in the field of emergency management, provides direct council to the FEMA Administrator to ensure “effective and ongoing coordination of federal preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation” for natural and technological disasters. The three-year positions are currently available for individuals in the following disciplines:

* Disabilities
* Emergency Management
* Emergency Response
* Non-Elected Local Government Officials
* Elected Tribal Government Officials
* Health Scientists
* Communications
* Infrastructure Protection
* Standards Settings and Accrediting

Interested individuals are asked to submit a Cover Letter and Resume to the Office of National Advisory Council by March 14, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[FEMA Press Release](http://www.fema.gov/news-release/2014/02/18/fema-seeks-applicants-national-advisory-council)

[<http://www.fema.gov/news-release/2014/02/18/fema-seeks-applicants-national-advisory-council>]

## DOT Seeks Comment on New Guidance Documents

February 19, 2014 — The Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released the first chapters for a proposed circular, meant to offer guidance to transportation providers regarding Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. The chapters released will be included among a series of approximately 12 chapters and feature the following topics:

* Chapter 1: Introduction and Applicability
* Chapter 2: General Requirements
* Chapter 5: Equivalent Facilitation
* Chapter 8: Complementary Paratransit Service

While the circular will not “alter, amend, supersede or otherwise affect” the ADA regulations, it will provide stakeholders with “a helpful outline of basic requirements” and examples of best practices in implementing those requirements. Currently, the DOT seeks comment on both the scope and content of the chapters, as well as additional best practices that can be included. Comments on the chapters are due April 24, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[FTA Proposed Circular Amendment](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-02-19/pdf/2014-03530.pdf)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-02-19/pdf/2014-03530.pdf>]

[Circular Amendment Text](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Proposed_ADA_Circular_Amendment_1.pdf)

[<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Proposed_ADA_Circular_Amendment_1.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

## W3C Proposes New Recommendations for Web Applications

February 6, 2014 — The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Protocols and Formats Working Group published proposed recommendations regarding Accessible Rich Internet Applications (WAI-ARIA). The document outlines “ways to make web content, particularly web applications, more accessible to people with disabilities.” Complementing the current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, the proposed recommendations provide developers with guidelines to ensure that dynamic content or interfaces developed with Ajax, HTML or JavaScript, are accessible for people with disabilities and operable with assistive technologies. Comments on the draft can be sent to <mailto:public-pfwg-comments@w3c.org> and are due by March 7, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[W3C Proposed Recommendation](http://www.w3.org/TR/wai-aria/)

[<http://www.w3.org/TR/wai-aria/>]

## FEMA Launches New Course on Ensuring Accessibility During Disasters

February 20, 2014 — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released a new Independent Study Course: IS-368: Including People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs in Disaster Operations. The course “provides an overview of disabilities and access and functional needs” and further explains how disaster staff and emergency management can ensure that all practices are inclusive and accessible. Following the course, disaster staff and emergency management should be aware of the legislative and regulatory framework ensuring the rights of people with disabilities in addition to knowing specific actions that can be used “to support integration of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs into” field disaster operations.

#### Additional Information

[IS-368: Including People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs in Disaster Operations](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-368)

[<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-368>]

## Be Part of a First – The IPAWS Unique Alert Services (UAS) Series

February 20, 2014 - FEMA’s Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Management Office (PMO) is holding the first webinar of the IPAWS Unique Alert Services (UAS) Series on Wednesday, March 12th, 2014 at 12:00 PM Eastern Time. This webinar series is IPAWS PMO’s answer to the alerting practitioners’ request to provide more information on unique alert services and tools available on the market. Some of the services demonstrated and discussed will include(among other things) information on how alerts are delivered (road signs, text messages, smartphone apps, web-based) and how alerts are presented (textual, visual graphics, geospatial map view, loudspeaker, siren). Following are the March presenters:

* March 12th at 12:00PM ET: NPR Labs

Monroe Electronics

* March 26th at 12:00PM ET: Deaf Link

M-EAS

MIR 3

#### Additional Information

[Webinar Invitation](https://complete-em.com/NewsFilePath/667449/63528529730000000014.htm) (includes log-in information for the March 12th webinar)

[<https://complete-em.com/NewsFilePath/667449/63528529730000000014.htm>]

## Annual Global Mobile Awards for Innovative Technologies

February 27, 2014 — The GSMA announced the winners of the 19th Annual Global Mobile Awards at a ceremony held at the GSMA Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. The ceremony recognizes new developments in mobile technologies ranging from health and banking to network infrastructure. The 2014 award winners included assistive technologies, such as Turkcell Dream Partner (a mobile application with text-to-speech and speech-to-text technology) Wibbitz Text-to-Video Technology (a mobile app which can convert text articles into videos) and the Magic Pencil (a distance learning device created by Enable Mobile Technologies). Regarding the event, GSMA CEO John Hoffman said “Now in the 19th year, the Global Mobile Awards once again showcase the outstanding level of innovation and creative products and services being developed across a diverse and growing industry. With more than 680 high caliber entries this year, the competition was stronger than ever and it is a significant achievement to have been honored.” A full list of winners can be found [here](http://www.globalmobileawards.com/winners-2014/).

#### Additional Information

[Winners 2014](http://www.globalmobileawards.com/winners-2014/)

[<http://www.globalmobileawards.com/winners-2014/>]

## WebAIM Releases Results from Screen Reader Survey

February 27, 2014 — Web Accessibility in Mind (WebAIM) released the results from a recent survey regarding the preferences of screen reader users. The international survey received over 1400 responses. To date, JAWS remains the most popular screen reader. Yet the survey indicates that free or low cost screen readers, such as NVDA or VoiceOver, are often seen as “viable alternatives to commercial screen readers.” Survey responses also indicate that the many of respondents (85%) use screen readers on multiple devices, and approximately 72% of respondents now use screen readers on mobile devices. The data collected from the surveys will be used to provide guidance and recommendations on the design and development of accessible web content.

#### Additional Information

[WebAIM Screen Reader User Survey Results](http://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey5/)

[<http://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey5/>]

## Sprint to Receive Change Maker Award

February 27, 2014 — Sprint has been selected as the recipient of the 2014 Change Maker Award. The annual award is presented by Quality Services for the Autism Community (QSAC) to recognize companies that have “made a meaningful commitment to supporting the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities.” This year, Sprint is being honored for their accessible technology, which includes products and services such as Sprint’s ID Accessibility Packs and Accessible Education ID Pack. The ID Accessibility Packs were developed by the [IDEAL Group](http://www.ideal-group.org/) with support from the [App Factory](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/app-factory-d1) project of the Wireless RERC.

Gary Maffei, executive director of QSAC, notes, “By recognizing Sprint, QSAC hopes to encourage others to actively support Sprint and similar efforts to expand access to technology for children and adults with autism.”

#### Additional Information

[Sprint Press Release](http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-receives-2014-qsac-change-maker-award-for-commitment-to-accessible-mobile-technology.htm)

[<http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-receives-2014-qsac-change-maker-award-for-commitment-to-accessible-mobile-technology.htm>]

# Publications and Reports

## ICT Accessibility Progress Report

February 13, 2014 — The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technology (G3ICT) and Disabled Persons International have released the third edition of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ICT Accessibility Progress Report.* The latest version of the report highlights that digital accessibility is expanding beyond “greater use of technologies by persons with disabilities” to focus on incorporating accessibility within ICT-based policies and practices. However, despite “advances of the broad CRPD legislative agenda,” many countries have neglected to involve disability organizations in policy development and have failed to implement mandatory digital accessibility training programs for future professionals. In highlighting progress the report provides foundational knowledge for CRPD ratifying countries to address any gaps and opportunities in ensuring ICT accessibility in their own countries.

#### Additional Information

[G3ICT Press Release](http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_75)

[<http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_75>]

## Pew Research Center Releases: The Web at 25 in the U.S.

February 27, 2014 — The Pew Research Center released a report marking the 25th anniversary of the World Wide Web. The Report highlights that since 1995, internet use has risen from 14% to 87% in 2014. Today, many devices are considered essential, with 46% and 44% of individuals noting that it would be difficult to give up the internet or their cell phones respectively. Many positive outcomes of the internet were also noted including the impact of online communication, which was said to generally strengthen relationships. The report is the first of a series to be released by the Pew Research Center in association with the Imagining the Internet Project at Elon University, all of which will discuss “emergency trends in digital technology.”

#### Additional Information

[Pew Research Center: The Web at 25](http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2014/02/PIP_25th-anniversary-of-the-Web_022714_pdf.pdf)

[<http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2014/02/PIP_25th-anniversary-of-the-Web_022714_pdf.pdf>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

## Wireless RERC at CSUN Conference - March 17-22, 2014

Wireless RERC researchers will be featured at the 2014 International Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference (CSUN) in San Diego, California March 17-22, 2014.  The papers include:

* *Are we Neglecting the 20%: Accessibility of Emergency Management Websites*, Wednesday, March 19th @ 10:40am;
* *Hearing Aid Compatibility: Results from a National Survey*, Wednesday, March 19th @ 10:40am;
* *Wireless Technology Uses and Activities by People with Disabilities*, March 19th @ 1:50pm.
* *Future of Disabilities: Is Technology Failing Us?*, Friday, March 21st @ 8;00am.

DeeDee Bennett, Salimah LaForce, and John Morris will be attending from the Wireless RERC.  Come meet us in San Diego!

#### Additional Information

[CSUN Conference Registration](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1>]

## New SUNspot - AAC Device Users and Mainstream Wireless Devices

The “SUNspot” series was created to share some of the latest findings from ongoing data collection for our Survey of User Needs (SUN), our cornerstone survey on use and usability of wireless technology by people with disabilities. We’re pleased to announce the availability of our latest edition of SUNspot for 2014. This SUNspot focuses on the use of smartphones and tablets by people with Complex Communication Needs (CCN), especially by users of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ACC) devices. Responses to this question are analyzed for:

* Whether people with CCN use mobile consumer technology, and if so, which technology and platforms do they use?
* Do they use smartphones and tablets or regular feature phones?
* If they do favor smart devices, is there a clear preference for tablets or smartphones?
* Is there a clear preference for a particular operating system?

#### Additional Information

[SUNspot - AAC Users and Mainstream Wireless Devices](http://wirelessrerc.org/sites/default/files/publications/sunspot_2014-01_aac%2520and%2520mobile%2520device%2520use_final.pdf)

[[http://wirelessrerc.org/sites/default/files/publications/SUNspot\_2014-01\_AAC%20and%20Mobile%20Device%20Use\_FINAL.pdf](http://wirelessrerc.org/sites/default/files/publications/SUNspot_2014-01_AAC%2520and%2520Mobile%2520Device%2520Use_FINAL.pdf)]

## 2014 “Getting Wireless” Student Design Challenge

February 19, 2014 — Jim Mueller, Wireless RERC researcher, introduced the 5th Annual “Getting Wireless” universal design challenge to 29 second-year Industrial Design students at Virginia Tech (VT). Along with the VT students, 40 second-year and 19 third-year Industrial Design students at Georgia Tech will begin the challenge in March. The theme of the 2014 “Getting Wireless” challenge is wearable technologies. Hands-on demonstrations of Google Glass will be provided to the students at the beginning of the project to offer them a starting point and encourage them to consider the diversity of emerging wearable devices. Final project designs will be presented at the Healthy Environments and Active Lifestyles (HEAL) event in May.

#### Additional Information

[“Getting Wireless” Student Design Challenge](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/building-research-capacity-t3)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/building-research-capacity-t3>]

## Wireless RERC Files Reply Comments on Accessibility of Devices for Video Programming

February 25, 2014 — The Wireless RERC submitted reply comment to the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM): *In the Matter of Accessibility of User Interfaces, and* *Programming Guides and Menus and Accessible Emergency Information and Apparatus Requirements for Emergency Information and Video Description: Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010.* The FNPRM requested input on defining the scope of Sections 204 and 205 of the Twenty First Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) which require user interfaces and navigation devices for video programming to be accessible to people with vision loss.

Wireless RERC comments highlighted that despite the presence of accessibility features on many devices, consumers are often unaware of these features. Accordingly, in agreement with the Consumer Groups and Telecom RERC, the Wireless RERC recommends implementation of “information, documentation and training requirements” in accessible formats for consumers with and without disabilities. The accessibility of the devices, equipment and services should be conceived as a continuum that includes the technology itself and any support for using/accessing the technology.

Regarding a mechanism for activating accessibility features, the Wireless RERC notes that “a minimal step *accessibility* button, key or icon” should be used to ensure ease of activating and inactivating accessibility features such as closed captioning and video description. However, they acknowledged and concurred with the Consumer Groups and Telecom RERC that the minimal step accessibility activation and configuration recommended does not supplant the need for a single step activation/deactivation of closed captions.

Finally, Wireless RERC comments disagree with the National Cable and Telecommunications Association’s (NCTA) position that the FCC does not have the legal authority to require a mechanism by which may enable people with visual disabilities may access a secondary audio stream for emergency information. Instead, the Wireless RERC stresses that the FCC’s basic mission is to “provide for the safety of life and property of Americans,” and accommodations for people with disabilities must be made to the fullest extent possible, including providing emergency information in the most accessible and effective format for each individual.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC Reply Comments](http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7521080447)

[[http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7521080447](http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7521080447)]

# Upcoming Events

## 29th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference

The Center on Disability at California State University will host the 2014 CSUN Conference in San Diego, California at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel from March 17 – 22, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[CSUN Conference Registration](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1>]

## European Knowledge Tree Technology Group Conference

The European Knowledge Tree Technology Group (EKTG) Conference will be held on March 24-25, 2014 at the London School of Economics. EKTG is an ad hoc group with members representing many fields including technology, finance, service and policy. The 2014 EKTG Conference will draw from these fields to discuss the use of technology in healthcare and the legal, ethical and regulatory issues that may result. Those interested in attending can register here.

#### Additional Information

[European Knowledge Tree Technology Group Conference](http://www.aaliance2.eu/node/172)

[<http://www.aaliance2.eu/node/172>]

[Conference Registration](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/european-knowledge-tree-group-2014-conference-tickets-9904857696)

[<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/european-knowledge-tree-group-2014-conference-tickets-9904857696>]

## 2014 Disability Policy Seminar

The 2014 Disability Seminar will be held in Washington, D.C. on April 7 – 9. The Seminar will offer individuals a chance to hear from “leading public policy experts, disability advocates and Congressional staff” as they discuss key topics relating to the disability community including Medicaid, Employment, Education, and Health Care. Registration for the event will open soon, and any questions can be sent to Robin Powers at <mailto:robin@cmig.com>.

#### Additional Information

[2014 Disability Policy Seminar](http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173)

[<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173>]

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights - February 2014

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org>].

For further information on items summarized in this report, or if you have items of interest that you would like included in future editions, please contact this edition’s editors, Braeden Benson [braeden@cacp.gatech.edu], Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu], or James White, Ph.D., [james@cacp.gatech.edu].

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This is a publication of the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies supported by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education, grant # H133E060061. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education.