



TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

July 2012



OVERVIEW

In July, the **Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act [S. 3187]** was enacted which establishes a working group to develop best practices, such as the use of Braille or “talking bottles” to ensure the accessibility of prescription drug labels. July 26th marked the 22nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Organizations and government agencies across the nation commemorated the day with discussions of the road travelled and the road ahead, with regard to independence and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. The Presidential Proclamation encouraged the Nation to celebrate the contributions of Americans with disabilities, acknowledging legislation aimed at empowering citizens with disabilities to be active, healthy and productive citizens.

Also in July, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission launched the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, making a total of \$10 million available annually. The Commission also began gathering information on the impact of the Twenty First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) for their first biennial report as required by the CVAA. The **Public Notice [DA 12-1051]** invites comment on the degree to which industry is in compliance with and taking measures to become compliant with the Act. The FCC published in the Federal Register the final rule, **Hearing Aid Compatibility Technical Standard**, adopting the 2011 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard for measuring the hearing aid compatibility of wireless phones.

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

[Legislative Activities](#)

[Regulatory Activities](#)

[Other Items of Interest](#)

[Wireless RERC Updates](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

NEW LAW FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG LABELING

July 9, 2012 – President Barack Obama signed into law, the **Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act [S. 3187]**. SEC. 904 establishes a U.S. Access Board working group which is tasked with developing best practices for pharmacies to “ensure blind and visually impaired individuals have safe, consistent, reliable, and independent access to the information on prescription drug container labels.” Best practices may include “talking bottles,” RFID tags or voice recorders, as well as some lower tech solutions such as high contrast printing, and the use of large, sans serif fonts. The working group must make the guide available to pharmacies one year after the date of enactment. Eighteen months after enactment, the Comptroller General will assess the impact the best practices guide is having on reducing barriers to information on drug labels.

[Source: 112th Congress]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[\[Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act \[S. 3187\]](#)

[\[http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s3187enr/pdf/BILLS-112s3187enr.pdf\]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s3187enr/pdf/BILLS-112s3187enr.pdf)

22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

July 26, 2012 – President Barack Obama encouraged the Nation to celebrate the contributions of American with disabilities in his presidential proclamation on the 22nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Proclamation acknowledges that there is still work to be done but points out legislative progress toward inclusion such as the implementation of new standards for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which will help ensure an inclusive educational environment for children with disabilities. Joining in the celebration, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Deputy Chief, Karen Peltz Strauss, represented the Federal Communications Commission at the White House event, and spoke on the implementation of the Twenty First Century Communications and

Video Accessibility Act of 2010, which is heralded by many as the most significant disability access law since the ADA. [Source: The White House]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Presidential Proclamation](#)

[<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/26/presidential-proclamation-anniversary-americans-disabilities-act-2012>]

[Whitehouse Anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act](#)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/blog/white-house-anniversary-americans-disabilities-act>]

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT PROGRAM LAUNCHED

July 2, 2012 –The Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission launched the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program on July 1, 2012. The goal of the program is to ensure that individuals who are deaf-blind will receive the specialized customer premises equipment needed to effectively access telecommunications services, Internet services, and advanced communications services. Specialized customer premises equipment is defined by Congress as “equipment employed on the premises of a person (other than a carrier) to originate, route or terminate telecommunications.” It may include mainstream, off the shelf equipment and/or assistive technology.

As part of the Commission’s implementation of the **Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA)**, a total of \$10 million, via the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, has been made available annually for the program. Fifty-three organizations have been selected to become authorized equipment distributors. Once all organizations complete the certification process, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will be running the pilot program. In order to ensure the success of the program, a holistic approach has been adopted, allowing program funds to be used for the distribution of equipment, as well as equipment installation and maintenance, individual assessments, individual training, and local outreach. [Source: Federal Communications Commission]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Public Notice](#)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0702/DA-12-1051A1.pdf]

FCC SEEKS COMMENT ON THE IMPACT OF THE CVAA OF 2010

July 12, 2012 –The Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission is seeking public comment on the impact of the passage of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) on the accessibility of telecommunications and advanced communications services and equipment. Input on the degree to which industry is in compliance with and taking measures to become compliant with the Act will be included in the Commission’s first biennial report as required by the CVAA. Although final rules and regulations for Section 716 of the Act addressing accessible mobile browsers have yet to be promulgated, the Commission expects industry to report on preparations to address the accessibility of their products, on record keeping procedures on the accessibility of their products, and on how they plan to respond to consumer complaints. With regard to compliance with Section 255, the Commission seeks to assess the “state of accessibility” of analog and digital handsets, cordless phones used with VoIP services and landlines, and wireless services and equipment, including smartphones. The assessment will include an examination of the ease of operation of the devices as well as the availability and range of accessible devices across the price spectrum and the provision of training to customer service and help desk personnel on accessible products and services. The report is due to Congress by October 8, 2012. [Source: Federal Communications Commission]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Public Notice](#)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0712/DA-12-1125A1.pdf]

NEW HEARING AID COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS

July 17, 2012 – The FCC published in the Federal Register the final rule, **Hearing Aid Compatibility Technical Standard**, adopting the 2011 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard for measuring the hearing aid compatibility of wireless phones. HAC ensures that consumers have access to wireless communication services without experiencing interference from radio frequencies or other technical sources. The new ANSI technical standard expands the operating frequency range for wireless devices covered from the previous standard which included 800 MHz – 950 MHz and 1.6 GHz to the new standard which includes 2.5 GHz to 698 MHz – 6GHz. The rule allows for handset models to be evaluated using the 2007 *or* 2011 ANSI standard for a 12 month period of transition. Meaning that handset models offered to consumers can be certified HAC compliant using the old standard. However, manufacturers and service providers are required to disclose to consumers any operations of the handsets that failed to meet HAC compliance when tested against the 2011 standard. After the 12 month transition period, the FCC will set a deployment benchmark of 2 years to allow time for service providers and manufactures to incorporate HAC compliant phones certified under the 2011 standard into their portfolios. [Source: Federal Register / Federal Communications Commission]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Final Rule](#)

[<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/07/17/2012-17113/hearing-aid-compatibility-technical-standard>]

WIRELESS RERC NEWS

WIRELESS RERC RESEARCHER PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

July 16, 2012 - DeeDee Bennett served as a panelist discussing "Evidence-Based Best Practices for Disability Issues" at the [37th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop](#). The panel discussed the state of research on disabilities and disasters and how this evidence is being translated (or not being translated) into best practices. Additionally, Ms. Bennett was a recorder for other sessions during this workshop. The workshop was held in Broomfield, Colorado on July 14-17, 2012. Some topics include: GIS, healthcare research, National Disaster Recovery Framework, and recovery best practices.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Workshop Details](#)

[<http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/workshop/2012/current12.html>]

APP FACTORY RELEASES ITS 2012-13 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Wireless RERC's App Factory is now inviting experienced app developers to submit proposals for financial support to develop assistive and/or accessibility apps for mobile platforms (e.g., Android, Blackberry 10, iOS, Windows Phone OS). The deadline for submission for 2012-13 funding is September 15, 2012. The complete Call for Proposals is available on the RERC's website.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Call for Proposal](#)

[<http://wirelessrerc.org/node/169>]

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

NEW NOTE-TAKER APP FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION LOSS

July 12, 2012 -The American Foundation for the Blind and FloCo Apps, LLC have collaborated to produce AccessNote, a note-taker app for any iOS tablet or smartphone. AccessNote is compatible with the built-in accessibility features of iOS such as Voice Over and the iOS screen reader. It is also compatible with Apple's wireless keyboard and wireless braille keyboards and displays. AccessNote is

scheduled for release this summer at a price point below \$30. [Source: American Foundation for the Blind]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[New Product Announcement](#)

[<http://www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw130702>]

GEORGIA TECH COLLABORATES IN EFFORT TO INCREASE BRAILLE MATERIALS

July 26, 2012 - In an effort to increase the number of printed materials for people who are blind and low vision, ex-offenders will be trained in Braille transcription, computer skills and business techniques. The program, Providing Real Opportunities for Income through Technology (or PROFITT), is currently being beta tested in a maximum-security institution in Texas. It was developed through a partnership of the National Braille Press, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC) at the Georgia Institute of Technology. PROFITT requires 750 hours of hands-on classroom training for approximately 30 weeks. Transcribing materials is of great need; currently for every 100 books published there is only one that is converted into Braille. [Georgia Tech]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Press Release](#)

[<http://www.gatech.edu/newsroom/release.html?nid=142851>]

UPCOMING EVENTS

DEVELOPING WITH ACCESSIBILITY (DEVACC)

DevAcc is an event hosted by the Office of Disability Employment and the FCC's Accessibility and Innovation Initiative (A&I) to promote the use of accessible and interoperable workplace technology. It is scheduled to take place at the FCC's Washington, D.C. headquarters on September 6 and 7, 2012. Attendees are asked to pre-register for the event by **August 31, 2012**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Event Details](#)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/events/developing-accessibility>]

GET READY GWINNETT! EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE FAIR & SPEAKER SERIES

The Gwinnett Emergency Preparedness Committee is hosting an Emergency Preparedness Resource Fair and Speaker Series on Saturday, September 15, 2012, from 9:00am – 4:00pm at the Annandale Village in Suwanee, Georgia. The goal of the event is to improve the preparedness of, and provide

resources to people with disabilities, the elderly and others with access and functional needs. To participate as a vendor and/or to attend send an e-mail to getreadygwinnett@gmail.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Help Line: 770-955-3339

getreadygwinnett@gmail.com

THE STATE OF THE STATES IN COGNITIVE DISABILITY AND TECHNOLOGY

The Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities will host their 12th annual conference, *The State of the States in Cognitive Disabilities and Technology*, on November 2, 2012 at the Westin Westminster Hotel in Westminster, Colorado. The conference will “cover an annual review of the state of the economy, the state of federal disability policy and law, and the state of technology with projections for the future and explorations of impact on quality of life for people with cognitive disabilities.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[The State of the States in Cognitive Disability and Technology](#)

[<http://www.colemaninstitute.org/>]

ACCESSING HIGHER GROUND

The University of Colorado at Boulder will host the 15th *Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference* from November 12 – 16, 2012 at the Westin Hotel in Westminster, Colorado. The conference “focuses on the implementation and benefits of accessible media, universal design and assistive technology in the university, business and public settings” and will discuss topics including the accessibility of PDF documents, mobile applications and websites.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Accessing Higher Ground](#)

[<http://www.colorado.edu/ATconference/index.html>]

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN CONFERENCE

WisTech in collaboration with The Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, and Milwaukee Public Schools will host the *Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference* from December 6 – 7, 2012 at the Glacier Canyon Lodge Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. The conference will discuss “successful applications of assistive technology for persons with disabilities” and will also feature an exhibition hall with hands-on assistive technology sessions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference](#)

[\[http://www.atacrosslifespan.org/\]](http://www.atacrosslifespan.org/)

THE WIRELESS INNOVATION FORUM CONFERENCE

The Wireless Innovation Forum will be hosting a conference on Communications Technologies and Software Defined Radio (SDR-WInnComm) in Washington, DC from January 8-13, 2013. The conference will discuss “advancement of reconfigurable radio technologies from research through deployment.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference](#)

[\[http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=102427&orgId=s1\]](http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=102427&orgId=s1)

2013 INTERNATIONAL CES CALL FOR SPEAKERS

The Consumer Electronics Agency (CEA) will host the *2013 International Consumer Electronics Show* (CES) from January 8 – 11, 2013 in Las Vegas, NV. Conference sessions include business insights, home entertainment, lifestyle technology, wireless communications, emerging technology, disruptive technologies, and in-vehicle technology.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[2013 International CES Call for Speakers](#)

[\[http://speaker.ce.org/index.cfm?do=cnt.page&pg=1003\]](http://speaker.ce.org/index.cfm?do=cnt.page&pg=1003)

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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 [\[http://www.wirelessrerc.org\]](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, Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu], or James White, Ph.D., [james@cacp.gatech.edu].

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