TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 12.5

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Overview

In May, President Barak Obama urged Senate members to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention was adopted by the United Nations in 2006 and signed by the United States in 2009. Ratification of the Convention would allow the United States to have more influence in the Convention by becoming a State Party to the Convention.

In the regulatory arena, the FCC has scheduled the next Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting for June 15, 2012. The agenda for the meeting includes, among other things, recommendations by the Broadband Working Group concerning the Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure Initiative. The FCC has also begun accepting nominations for the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman's AAA). The awards are "designed to recognize the efforts of individuals, organizations, academics, companies and government agencies to make communication tools easier to use and more accessible to people with disabilities, and to encourage technological innovation and accessibility in communications-related areas."

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

Legislative Activities

President Urges Senate to Ratify Convention

05.17.2012 – President Barack Obama urged the Senate to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted by the United Nations on in 2006 and signed by the United States in 2009. The Convention is a "human rights instrument" that "clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced." Of the Convention, President Barak Obama stated, "Anchored in the principles of equality of opportunity, nondiscrimination, respect for dignity and individual autonomy, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Convention seeks to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities." Ratification of the Convention would allow the United States to become a State Party to the Convention, allowing for more influence. Currently seven U.S. Senators, including John McCain (R-AZ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Tom Harkin (D-IA), John Barrasso (R-WY), Chris Coons (D-DE) and Tom Udall (D-NM), have announced support for the ratification. Senator Tom Harkin stated, "The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities builds on the U.S. experience implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act and promoting equal opportunity and full participation for all people with disabilities in the lives of their communities." [Source: The White House, United Nations, U.S. Senator John McCain]

Additional Information:

Statement by President Obama
[http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-112tdoc7/html/CDOC-112tdoc7.htm]
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
[http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150]
Senator Support
[http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=84b3c564-d49f-0cf5-7742-9ff158d8ef7e&Region_id=&Issue_id=]

FCC Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting

05.17.12 – The next Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2012 in Washington, D.C. At the meeting, the Committee will discuss topics including recommendations by the Broadband Working Group concerning the Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure Initiative, an initiative to create a "software and service enhancement" to the broadband infrastructure ensuring easy access to accessibility features. Additional topics include recommendations by the Media Working Group concerning the Emergency Alert System and recommendations by the Consumer Empowerment Group concerning text spamming. A live broadcast of this meeting will be available at http://www.fcc.gov/live/. In addition, the public can follow the meeting on Twitter using the hash tag #fcclive.

Additional Information:
FCC Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting
[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0517/DA-12-770A1.pdf]
Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure
[http://gpii.net/]

FCC Accepting Nominations for the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility

05.23.12 – The FCC has begun accepting nominations for the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman's AAA). The awards are "designed to recognize the efforts of individuals, organizations, academics, companies and government agencies to make communication tools easier to use and more accessible to people with disabilities, and to encourage technological innovation and accessibility in communications-related areas." Nominations are due by July 31, 2012 and can be sent to mailto:chairmansaaa@fcc.gov. Categories include education, deaf-blind solutions, video programming device solutions, geo-locations solutions, mobile apps, consumer empowerment information, and civic participation solutions. Winners will be recognized during a ceremony held at the FCC headquarters in October 2012. In addition, the FCC is inviting nominees and other interested parties to display their "new accessible communications technologies" at the FCC Technology Experience Center during the month of October. Those interested in displaying their work are asked to email chairmansaaa@fcc.gov by August 1, 2012. [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:
Chairman's AAA
[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0523/DA-12-814A1.pdf]

Publications and Reports

21st Century Digital Government Strategy

05.23.12 – The Federal Chief Information Officer has released the report "Digital Government: Building a 21st Century Platform to Better Serve the American People" outlining a strategy for government agencies to better deliver digital services. The strategy outlines three "layers" that are included in providing digital services including the information layer, the information provided to consumers; the platform layer, including the "systems and processes used to manage" the information; and the presentation layer, how the information is displayed to the consumers. The strategy further highlights how each layer can be utilized to enable government agencies, and sometimes public and private sector agencies, to coordinate and effectively utilize digital services. Goals include making policies for the use of open data, content and web application programming interfaces (API), establishing a Digital Services Innovation Center and Advisory Group, creating an inventory of current agency mobile devices and services and streamlining future purchases, and creating mobile versions of "at least two priority customer-facing services within the next 12 months." According to President Obama, "Ultimately, this Strategy will ensure that agencies use emerging technologies to serve the public as effectively as possible. As a Government, and as a trusted provider of services, we must never forget who our customers are -- the American people." Each government agency is required to make public their progress in implementing the requirements of the Strategy. Though the Strategy does not make it explicit, as per Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (47 U.S.C. §§ 153, 255), the digital services outlined in the Strategy must be accessible to citizens with disabilities.
 [Source: The White House]

Additional Information:

Digital Government: Building a 21st Century Platform to Better Serve the American People
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/egov/digital-government/digital-government-strategy.pdf]
President's Remarks
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/2012digital_mem_rel.pdf]

Other Items of Interest

End of the M-EAS Pilot Program

05.16.2012 –The year-long Mobile Emergency Alert System (M-EAS) Pilot Project sponsored by PBS, LG Electronics, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting ended in April. Dr. Jong Kim, the president of Zenith R&D Lab, a subsidiary of LG Electronics working on the project highlighted the importance of the project stating, "We're showing how mobile emergency alerts might be received by a new generation of smartphones that are equipped to receive mobile DTV broadcasts as well as telephone and Internet access. We think this new system will be extremely valuable to federal, state and local

emergency management agencies and the public they serve, while extending the community service role of public and commercial broadcasters alike." PBS and LG Electronics gave the first public demonstration at the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES), when the Vegas PBS transmitted emergency alerts to simulate scenarios such as AMBER Alerts, suspicious packages, and tsunami and tornado warnings. The alerts were transmitted via mobile DTV signals to DTV-equipped mobile devices such as phones, navigation systems, or laptops and contain rich media content such as video, audio, text and graphics. Enhanced emergency alerts are extremely important for people with disabilities, especially in providing improved accessibility. In addition, M-EAS "requires no additional spectrum and is an additional use of existing TV transmitters and towers." [Source: PR Newswire]

Additional Information:
PBS New Release
[http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/mobile-emergency-alert-system-pilot-project-proves-viability-of-mobile-dtv-for-emergency-alerts-147577325.html]

Department of Labor App Challenge
05.24.12 – The Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has launched an app challenge inviting participants to compete for $10,000 in prizes and a chance for their app to be featured on the ODEP website. The challenge aims to "promote recruitment resources for employers, develop job training and skill-building tools for job seekers, facilitate employment-related transportation options and expand information communication technology accessibility." The assistant secretary of labor for disability policy, Kathy Martinez, highlighted the importance of this challenge stating, "Using today's technology, we hope to inspire creative and innovative solutions to the pressing employment-related problems faced by people with disabilities." Currently, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 12.5 percent compared to 7.6 percent of people without disabilities. Submissions are asked to address the unemployment gap by ensuring that the apps are accessible, "provide access to important data and resources," and are intended for a variety of job seekers, career counselors and employers. Submissions for the challenge are due on August 23, 2012. [Source: Department of Labor]

Additional Information:
Department of Labor News Release
[http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep/ODEP20121046.htm]
DOL Office of Disability Policy
[http://www.dol.gov/odep/]

Department of Education Funding Opportunity

05.21.12 – The Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has issued a notice inviting applications for funding opportunities concerning technology and media services for individuals with disabilities. The priority aims to provide funding for projects which "identify resources needed to effectively implement evidence based technology tools that benefit students with disabilities, and develop and disseminate products that will help a broad range of schools to effectively implement these technology tools." The priority requires that all projects develop a technological tool which can "improve the academic achievement" of students with disabilities. The development of the tool should be "an interactive process beginning in a single development school and continuing through interactive cycles of development and refinement in other development schools, followed by a formative evaluation and refinement in pilot schools." Projects are also required to coordinate with the OSEP-funded Model Demonstration Coordination Center concerning the design, implementation and dissemination of the technology tool. OSEP is currently offering up to seven awards with a proposed budget of up to $500,000 for 12 months. Applications are due July 5, 2012. [Source: Federal Registrar]

Additional Information:

Department of Education Funding Priority
[https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/05/21/2012-12278/applications-for-new-awards-technology-and-media-services-for-individuals-with]

Wireless RERC Updates

Jim Mueller Presents at AIA Convention

Jim Mueller, co-project director for the Wireless RERC's User-Centered Research project , presented samples from the "Getting Wireless: Exploring Universal Design in Wireless Technologies" student design project during a seminar at the Architects Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. on May 19. During the month of April, student teams at Virginia Tech and Georgia Tech developed solutions for the wireless customer personas created based on data collected through the Wireless RERC's Survey of User Needs (SUN). Students' solutions at both schools included 3D models of wireless handsets and storyboards for applications to enhance the use and usability of these devices. All student project posters and teams will be displayed on the new Wireless RERC website. Stay tuned for the notice of their availability.

Wireless RERC Recommends Accessibility Concerns be Included in the NTIA CPS Supplement

05.31.2012 – The Wireless RERC filed comments with the Department of Commerce "In the Matter of Computer and Internet Use Supplement to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey" **[FR Doc. 2012-8103]**. The comments responded to a proposal by The Department of Commerce's National

Telecommunications and Information Administration to add twelve questions to the Current Population Survey (CPS) Computer and Internet Use Supplement. The comments highlight that broadband availability, affordability and accessibility are directly important for people with disabilities. Specifically, for many deaf and hard of hearing people, broadband applications encompassing text and video-based communications and data access are their most important broadband wireless device functions. Therefore, the Wireless RERC proposed that additional demographic questions should be added to the CPS asking respondents to self-identify if they have a disability, allowing for the determination of specific trends amongst disability populations. In addition, the comments proposed to include questions concerning if an individual utilizes assistive technology to access the Internet and its content, and if accessibility issues or the cost of assistive technology were concerns when purchasing broadband services or equipment. [Source: WirelessRERC]

Additional Information:
Wireless RERC Comments

Wireless RERC Researcher, Ed Price, on NPR's Marketplace
Ed Price, co-director on the Wireless RERC's App Factory project was recently featured on NPR's Marketplace discussing with John Moe, host of Marketplace's Tech Report, Verizon's recent testing of a text-to-911 system in Durham, NC.   During the radio segment Ed detailed some of the issues the text-to-911 solution faces, like how the 911 center currently does not know the exact location of the caller. However, he also stated that while the solution is not yet complete, it could be used as an interim solution for the deaf or hard of hearing.

Additional Information:
American Public Media Marketplace
[http://www.marketplace.org/topics/tech/text-911-program-launch-next-year]

Upcoming Events
2013 International CES Call for Speakers
The Consumer Electronics Agency (CEA) has issued a Call for Speakers for the 2013 International CES to be held January 8 – 11, 2013 in Las Vegas, NV. Conference sessions included in the Call for Speakers focus on business insights, home entertainment, lifestyle technology, wireless communications, emerging technology, disruptive technologies, and in-vehicle technology. Those interested are asked to submit a proposal by June 5, 2012.

Additional Information:
2013 International CES Call for Speakers
[http://speaker.ce.org/index.cfm?do=cnt.page&pg=1003]

NENA Conference

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) will be hosting their annual conference at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California from June 9 – 14, 2012. The conference will discuss many public safety topics, including Next Generation 9-1-1, social networking and emergency response, and accessibility within public safety. The conference will also include an exhibit hall with over 120 "providers of emergency communications products and services."

Additional Information:
NENA2012
[http://www.nena.org/?page=NENA2012]

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 and mobile applications and websites.

Additional Information:
Accessing Higher Ground
[http://www.colorado.edu/ATconference/index.html]

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." The Wireless Innovation Forum is currently accepting abstracts relating to research and development of SDR-WInComm, covering topics such as "next generation radio technologies, advanced wireless networks and infrastructure, software communications architecture, and standards for reconfigurable radio and supporting components." Abstracts are due April 30, 2012 and can be submitted to the following website: [https://www.edas.info/newPaper.php?c=1215943-1634].

Additional Information:
The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference
[http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=102427&orgId=s1]
The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference: Abstract Submission
[http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page/RandD_Call_For_Submissions]

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].

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