Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

November – December 2014

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**Top 25 TDPH Topics of 2014**

Image of Word Cloud with Top 25 TDPH topics of 2014.  In order
1. accessing
2. wireless
3. community
4. emergency
5. services
6. research
7. rehabilitation
8. educational
9. policy
10. devices
11. assistive
12. webiste
13. hearing
14 design
15. employment
16. blind
17. alerts
18. deaf
19. mobile
20. vision
21. legilsative
22. apps
23. engineering
24.telecommunications
25. health

# Overview

In November and December the global disability community was addressed at home and abroad by commemorating the *2014 International Day of Persons with Disabilities* on December 3, 2014 and a “High-level Meeting” during Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) week, discussing equal access and inclusive development for people with disabilities. Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State, Judith E. Heumann, focused attention on the global disability community in her remarks at the *High-level Meeting: Equal Access, Inclusive Development.* She stated, “We have much to learn from each other, and everything to gain in building more inclusive societies, with workforces that benefit from the unique contributions of persons with disabilities.” On December 2nd, in observance of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation calling for the celebration of individuals with disabilities around the world and the fundamental right to dignity, freedom, and community available to all people. He also remarked on his continued efforts to encourage the Senate to ratify the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a point also addressed by the National Council on Disability (NCD). Reaffirming the need for laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act, NCD took the opportunity to restate their support for ratification of the CRPD, specifying that “incidence of poverty, lack of educational and/or employment opportunities” inhibit many people with disabilities from realizing the same benefits of technology, and consequently a higher standard of living, available to non-disabled persons.

The Federal Commutations Commission (FCC) closed out 2014 with two calls for participation in FCC committees that will focus on issues impacting consumers. They established a new Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), which will offer recommendations to the FCC concerning disability access issues, assist in educating the public on disability-related matters, and facilitate the participation of consumers with disabilities in FCC proceedings. The FCC also renewed its Consumer Advisory Committee to provide evidence-based guidance to the FCC that addresses (1) consumer protection and education; (2) implementation of Commission rules and consumer participation in the FCC rulemaking process; and (3) the impact of new emerging communications technologies.

Regarding participation in the rulemaking process, the FCC issued a Public Notice [**WT Docket Nos. 07-250 and 10-254**] seeking updated information to assess whether current hearing aid compatibility (HAC) rules for wireless handsets effectively address the needs of people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. They also issued a Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking [**CG Docket No. 05-231**] seeking additional comment on proposed rules to require video programmers to file contact information and certifications of captioning compliance.

The FCC rules requiring Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) providers and other providers of interconnected text messaging applications to support the text-to-911 service were accepted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rendering them enforceable. The Second Report and Order, among other things, provided that covered text providers have a six-month implementation period to begin routing all 911 text messages to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) by June 30, 2015 or within six months of a valid PSAP request for text- to-911 service.

In next month’s issue, Wireless RERC news will include a discussion of the top 25 topics addressed in this newsletter, as well as which stories had the most social media shares.

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

[Executive Branch Activities](#ExecutiveBranchActivities)

[Regulatory Activities](#regulatoryactivities)

[Publications & Reports](#PublicationsandReports)

[Other Items of Interest](#otheritemsofinterest)

[Upcoming Events](#Upcomingevents)

## Executive Branch Activities

**2015 White House Conference on Aging**

The White House announced that it will host its White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) in 2015, marking the 80th anniversary of Social Security and 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act. The 2015 WHCoA will highlight key programs in place to assist seniors during their golden years and engage the public and other stakeholders on issues facing older Americans. Some of the selected topics include: retirement security, healthy aging, long-term service and supports, and the Elder Justice Act (enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act). Seniors, caregivers, and family members are encouraged to participate and submit ideas for the WHCoA to the Get Involved section of [www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov](http://www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov). The details concerning the event are underway. For additional questions or to provide specific input, please contact:

White House Conference on Aging

(202) 619-3636,

[info@whaging.gov](mailto:info@whaging.gov )

**U.S. Department of State Remarks on International Disability Rights**

November 10, 2014 – A “High-level Meeting” took place during Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Week in Beijing this month discussing equal access and inclusive development for people with disabilities. Hosted by the Chinese Disabled Persons’ Federation, the meeting shared the global stage intending to focus attention on the global disability community.

Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State, Judith E. Heumann, prepared remarks for the *High-level Meeting: Equal Access, Inclusive Development*, highlighting China’s achievements in the field as well as the need for equal opportunities in education and employment for people with disabilities everywhere. Heumann stated, “I look forward to exploring how we can work together as APEC economies to improve development outcomes for persons with disabilities, including through enhanced legislative, enforcement, and programmatic initiatives to support equal access to education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.”

Specifically addressing the disability community as a global community, Heumann closed, “We have much to learn from each other, and everything to gain in building more inclusive societies, with workforces that benefit from the unique contributions of persons with disabilities.”

#### ADDITIONA INFORMATION

[Remarks at the High-level Meeting: Equal Access, Inclusive Development](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rm/2014/233922.htm)

[http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rm/2014/233922.htm]

**Presidential Proclamation for International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

December 2, 2014 – In observance of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation calling for the celebration of individuals with disabilities around the world and the fundamental right to dignity, freedom, and community available to all people.

Reaffirming disability rights as a civil and universal right, President Obama celebrated the day by remembering the United States’ historical achievement, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the signing of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) during his administration. Restating his commitment to human rights and equality, President Obama remarked on his continued efforts when calling upon the Senate to ratify CRPD, supporting a fair opportunity for education, employment, and societal participation.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Presidential Proclamation -- International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 2014](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/02/presidential-proclamation-international-day-persons-disabilities-2014)

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/02/presidential-proclamation-international-day-persons-disabilities-2014]

## Regulatory Activities

**Justice Dept. Forces Peapod LLC to make Website Accessible**

November 10, 2014 – The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) reached a settlement agreement with Peapod, LLC, a website and mobile application operator that provides grocery delivery, concerning claims that www.peapod.com is not accessible to some individuals with disabilities. The DOJ compliance review alleged Peapod violated Title III of the ADA by neglecting to provide features that would allow individuals to fully participate, because:

“(1) images, buttons, and form fields are unlabeled or have inaccurate alternative text;

(2) pop-up modal windows are not reported to screen readers;

(3) frames are not named or identified;

(4) tables are missing header information and proper mark-ups; and

(5) boldface type is used to show which fields are required.”

Under terms of the agreement Peapod LLC, and parent company Ahold USA, must comply with ADA requirements by updating the company’s website so assistive technologies can provide users with disabilities equal enjoyment of the service.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Settlement Agreement](http://www.manatt.com/uploadedFiles/Content/4_News_and_Events/Newsletters/AdvertisingLaw@manatt/Settlement%20Agreement%20between%20the%20United%20States%20of%20America%20and%20Ahold%20U.S.A.,%20Inc.pdf) [<http://www.manatt.com/uploadedFiles/Content/4_News_and_Events/Newsletters/AdvertisingLaw@manatt/Settlement%20Agreement%20between%20the%20United%20States%20of%20America%20and%20Ahold%20U.S.A.,%20Inc.pdf>]

**FTA Seeks Comments on Proposed ADA Guidance**

November 12, 2014 – The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has proposed guidance in the form of seven additional circular chapters to be added to their *Americans with Disabilities Act Circular C 4710.1,* a document to assist transportation providers in meeting the requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. Publishing a notice in the Federal Register, the FTA invited public comment on the following chapters:

* Chapter 3 (Transportation Facilities),
* Chapter 6 (Fixed Route Service),
* Chapter 7 (Demand Responsive Service),
* Chapter 9 (ADA Paratransit Eligibility),
* Chapter 10 (Passenger Vessels),
* Chapter 11 (Other Modes), and
* Chapter 12 (Oversight, Complaints, and Monitoring).

Along with the previously proposed chapters, these additions are recommended as the remaining chapters needed to comprise a complete ADA circular. Comments are due on February 11, 2015. Follow the proceeding link for instructions on how to file: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325_16232.html>.

To read a full copy of the FTA’s proposed circular chapters: Federal Register Notice Proposed Circular Amendment 2 (PDF), please click the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Americans With Disabilities Act: Proposed Circular Amendment 2](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_Draft_Chapters_ADA_Circular_Amendment_2_-_Final.pdf)

[<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_Draft_Chapters_ADA_Circular_Amendment_2_-_Final.pdf>]

**OMB Approves Amendments to Text-to-911 & NG911 Deployment**

November 14, 2014 – The FCC announced that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved the information collection associated with the FCC's Second Report and Order that adopted rules requiring Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) providers and other providers of interconnected text messaging applications to support the text-to-911 service. The Second Report and Order also provided that covered text providers have a six-month implementation period to begin routing all 911 text messages to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) by June 30, 2015 or within six months of a valid PSAP request for text- to-911 service. To implement these requirements, the FCC is seeking to collect information primarily for a database in which PSAPs will register that they are technically ready to receive 911 text messages. PSAP registration will be accepted through the PSAP database, submission to PS Docket Nos. 10-255 and 11-153 if the database is not yet available, or by providing other written notification.

The OMB approval is consistent with the Second Report and Order, which stated that the FCC would publish a document in the Federal Register announcing the effective date of those rules. The amendments to 47 CFR 20.18 were originally published September 16, and became effective with this announcement under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3507).

For more information about the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval, please click the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications: Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment, 68132–68133 [2014–26544]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-11-14/pdf/2014-26544.pdf)

[http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-11-14/pdf/2014-26544.pdf]

**FCC Established Disability Advisory Committee**

December 2, 2014 – In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the FCC has established a new federal Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). DAC will offer recommendations to the FCC concerning disability access issues, assist in educating the public on disability-related matters, and facilitate the participation of consumers with disabilities in FCC proceedings. The Committee will also address closed captioning and video description, access to televised emergency information, access to 9-1-1 emergency services, and other related issues.

The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA), the leading association representing the manufacturers and suppliers of high-tech communications networks, applauded the FCC’s efforts stating, “DAC will serve as a useful mechanism to facilitate ongoing conversation between all stakeholders on issues of accessible use and access to telecommunications technology.”

For more information about the Disability Advisory Committee, please contact E. Elaine Gardner, Designated Federal Officer for the FCC’s Consumer and Governmental

Affairs Bureau, at (202) 418-0581 or [Elaine.Gardner@fcc.gov](mailto:Elaine.Gardner@fcc.gov).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Announces the Establishment of the Disability Advisory Committee and Solicits Nominations for Membership](FCC%20Announces%20the%20Establishment%20of%20the%20Disability%20Advisory%20Committee%20and%20Solicits%20Nominations%20for%20Membership)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-14-1737A1.pdf>]

**FCC Accepting Membership for Consumer Advisory Committee**

December 10, 2014 – The FCC announced the renewal of its Consumer Advisory Committee and is currently seeking applications for membership. The Committee, renewed October 20, 2014, is tasked with making recommendations to the Commission regarding consumer issues and to facilitate consumer participation (including underserved populations, rural populations, older adults, people with disabilities, and those who speak English as a second language). The Committee will also provide evidence-based guidance to the FCC that addresses:

* Consumer protection and education;
* Implementation of Commission rules and consumer participation in the FCC rulemaking process, and;
* The impact of new emerging communications technologies (including availability and affordability of broadband service and Universal Service programs).

Nominations and membership applications should be submitted by 11:59 P.M., January 19, 2015. The online application form is available at: <http://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/cac/CAC_Application.html>.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Announces Renewal of Consumer Advisory Committee and Solicits Membership Applications](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1211/DA-14-1806A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1211/DA-14-1806A1.pdf>]

**Dept. of Ed Reaches Equal Access Agreement with Youngstown State**

December 12, 2014 – The U.S. Department of Education announced that its Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has entered into an agreement with Youngstown State University to ensure that the school’s websites are in compliance with federal civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. The announcement comes through a resolution letter issued to the university’s President implicating the institution failed to accommodate people with sensory impairments who might require the use of assistive technology to access the web. The agreement resolves an investigation brought by the OCR which determined that the school was not in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act due to the following:

* The university’s websites were not readily accessible to persons with disabilities; and
* Youngstown State was not in full compliance with the regulatory requirements regarding the publication of a notice of nondiscrimination in relevant documents.

The agreement requires that the university provide equal access to educational opportunities for students with disabilities, develop and publish one consistent notice of nondiscrimination that includes contact information for the person(s) designated to ensure compliance with Section 504 and Title II, provide notice of a Web accessibility policy and an implementation and remediation plan, train staff responsible for webpage and content development, and more.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[U.S. Education Department Reaches Agreement with Youngstown State University to Ensure Equal Access to its Websites for Individuals with Disabilities](http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/youngstown-state-university-letter.pdf)

[<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/youngstown-state-university-letter.pdf>]

**Closed Captions Quality Rulemaking**

December 15, 2014 –The FCC issued a Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking [CG Docket No. 05-231] seeking additional comment on several issues related to matters raised in the FCC's Closed Captioning Quality Order released in February 2014. These issues included whether the FCC should require video programmers to file contact information and certifications of captioning compliance and whether other means would make programmer contact information and certifications more widely available. Further comments also addressed whether potential rule modifications would alter any previous positions held by the FCC and whether there are justifications for the FCC changing course.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Closed Captioning of Video Programming; Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. Petition for Rulemaking](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1215/FCC-14-206A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1215/FCC-14-206A1.pdf>]

**FCC Seeks Nominations for Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility**

December 22, 2014 – The FCC is currently accepting nominations for the Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman’s AAA) for products, services, technologies or practices introduced to the public during 2014. The Chairman’s AAA, coordinated by the FCC’s Accessibility and Innovation Initiative (A&I Initiative), honors private and public sector innovation in technology access for people with disabilities.

The initiative is designed to recognize the efforts of individuals, organizations, and agencies for technological and accessibility efforts in communications-related areas. Nominations will be accepted in the following categories:

* CAPTCHA Alternatives
* Internet of Things
* Wearable Devices
* Real-time Text
* Teleconferencing
* Video Description
* Augmented Reality
* Miscellaneous

Nominations may be submitted through March 5, 2015 to [ChairmansAAA@fcc.gov](mailto:ChairmansAAA@fcc.gov). Winners and honorable mentions will be recognized at a ceremony to be held in June 2015.

For more information about the Chairman’s AAA ceremony, please contact Jamal Mazrui, Deputy Director, Accessibility and Innovation Initiative, via phone (202) 418-0069 or via email at [Jamal.Mazrui@fcc.gov](mailto:Jamal.Mazrui@fcc.gov) or Kelly Jones, (202) 418-7078 or email, [Kelly.Jones@fcc.gov](mailto:Kelly.Jones@fcc.gov), or call the ASL Consumer Support Line, at 1-844-432-2275 via videophone. Inquiries may also be sent to [ChairmansAAA@fcc.gov](mailto:ChairmansAAA@fcc.gov).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Seeking Nominations for 2nd Chairman's AAA](http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-seeking-nominations-2nd-chairmans-aaa)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-seeking-nominations-2nd-chairmans-aaa>]

**FCC Seeks Comment and Updated information on Wireless Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations**

December 23, 2014 – The FCC issued a Public Notice [**WT Docket Nos. 07-250 and 10-254**] on behalf of their Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (Wireless Bureau) and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) seeking updated information to assess whether current hearing aid compatibility rules for wireless handsets effectively address the needs of people who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

Given recent deployment of LTE networks, Wi-Fi calling, and various other developments, the Wireless Bureau and CGB seeks updated information that provide insight into the current consumer experience, technical and/or other barriers to the provision of hearing aid compatible devices on new wireless technologies, and considerations for amending associated FCC rules for Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) compliance. While some of the rules currently impose hearing aid compatibility requirements based on the underlying network technology and not on a device’s functionality, the FCC seeks to update the record on two principle issues:

1. Should the FCC revise the hearing aid compatibility requirement to apply in a technologically neutral way to all mobile wireless devices that can be used for voice communications?
2. Should the FCC consider moving away from the fractional compliance regime that exists today and implement a requirement that all mobile wireless devices must comply with the hearing aid compatibility rules?

Comments are due on January 22, 2015 and reply comments are due on February 6, 2015.

#### ADDITIONA INFORMATION

[Request for Updated Information and Comment on Wireless Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1121/DA-14-1688A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1121/DA-14-1688A1.pdf>]

**Sony Settles Disability Discrimination Lawsuit with EEOC**

December 23, 2014 – Sony Electronics, Inc. has resolved a federal discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) concerning allegations that the corporation violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when terminating a temporary worker on the basis of her disability. The alleged violation was incited as a result of a termination stemming from the assumption that the employee would pose liability risks if bumped into or knocked down due to her use of a prosthetic leg. Consequently, Sony reached a settlement with the EEOC, agreeing to pay $85,000 in monetary relief.

Staffmark Investments LLC, the staffing company and first defendant named in the lawsuit, ended their stake in the suit with a consent decree entered June 25, 2013, under which Staffmark agreed to pay $100,000 to the employee.

According to Julianne Bowman, EEOC Acting Chicago District Director and manager of the investigation, “We found that although the employee’s removal was executed by Staffmark employees, it was actually prompted by a request from Sony’s management which made Sony complicit in the discrimination.”

For more information about the settlement agreement or read a full copy of the EEOC’s press release, please click the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Sony to Pay $85,000 under Decree Resolving EEOC Disability Discrimination Suit](http://eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/12-23-14a.cfm)

[<http://eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/12-23-14a.cfm>]

## Publications & Reports

**The Struggle for Web Accessibility by Persons with Cognitive Disabilities**

November 2014 – A new book chronicling the journey towards disability rights and web equality for people with cognitive disabilities is now available. Entitled *eQuality: The Struggle for Web Accessibility by Persons with Cognitive Disabilities*, the book outlines and advocates principles for an inclusive and accessible web, providing people with disabilities the “right to the Web, to freedom of speech and to individual dignity.” Written by Peter Blanck, a Syracuse University Professor and chairman of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI), *eQuality* connects the influences of the Americans with Disabilities Act, communications technology, and need for people with various disabilities to have meaningful societal involvement.

A review from David Braddock, Director of the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities, praises *eQuality*, stating: “We must do our best to invite people with cognitive disabilities to become an integral part of our digital world. It's their right. It's society's gain. It's the right thing to do. So, hooray for *eQuality*! And hooray for Peter Blanck's high achievement in the publication of this pathbreaking book.”

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[*EQUALITY: The Struggle for Web Accessibility by Persons with Cognitive Disabilities*](http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/law/socio-legal-studies/equality-struggle-web-accessibility-persons-cognitive-disabilities?format=HB)

[<http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/law/socio-legal-studies/equality-struggle-web-accessibility-persons-cognitive-disabilities?format=HB>]

**Bringing the FCC’s Lifeline Program Into the 21st Century**

November 6, 2014 – The Internet Innovation Alliance (IIA), a coalition of business and non-profit organizations that support equal opportunity for universal broadband availability, released a white paper calling for reform of the FCC’s Lifeline Program. The existing Lifeline Program, established in the 1980s, provides financial incentives to telephone service providers who offer low-income consumers access to land-line service at a discounted rate. IIA proposes a streamline of the outdated system to enhance the availability of Internet broadband and modern communication services to low-income consumers.

The report highlights various issues with the existing system as it relates to a decrease in popularity of 19th century communications technologies, market imbalances, system administration, and consumer choice. IIA recommends a restructure of the Lifeline Program to better serve the needs of a modern public with modern technology. The recommended practices include:

1. Including broadband service in the program;
2. Providing consumers with the subsidy directly;
3. Broadening of consumer choice; and
4. Assigning the administration of Lifeline to an appropriate government agency.

For more information or to read the full report, please click the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Bringing The FCC’s Lifeline Program Into The 21st Century](http://internetinnovation.org/images/misc_content/Lifeline_White_Paper_FINAL.pdf)

[<http://internetinnovation.org/images/misc_content/Lifeline_White_Paper_FINAL.pdf>]

## Other Items of Interest

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

December 3, 2014 – December 3 commemorated the 22nd annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), an observance promoting understanding of disability issues and support of the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. Sponsored by the United Nations since 1992, the event sought to increase global awareness of “gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.”

This year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities official theme focused on the power of technology: “Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology.” For the nearly 1 billion people living with some form of disability around the world, technological advancement holds the promise of a more inclusive and interactive future. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, people with disabilities make up the world’s largest minority group but remain largely uninvolved in development processes. This year’s theme aims to reiterate accessibility as a means of empowering persons with disabilities, with three sub-themes promoting inclusive and sustainable development:

* Disability-Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals
* Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Responses
* Creating Enabling Work Environments

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2014](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1620)

[<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1620>]

**United Nations Hosts Digital Accessibility Policy Report Panel**

December 3, 2014 – In honor of International Persons with Disabilities Day, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) hosted “Crossing the Digital Divide,” a panel discussion reviewing the newly released *Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report*. The report, jointly published by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict), is intended to be a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework for digital accessibility. Published in November 2014, the report is designed to assist regulators and policy-makers in the creation of their own policies and programs while considering the challenges people with disabilities experience when using many mainstream information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Contributing heavily to dispositions and good practices from the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the report included six modules focusing on different aspects of ICT accessibility: amendments to the existing ICT legal framework, public ICT access, mobile communications, television/video programming, web accessibility, and public procurement of accessible ICTs.

Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, Brahima Sanou reaffirmed, “I believe that creating and implementing national ICT accessibility policy frameworks will lead to unprecedented growth in accessible ICTs and the empowerment of persons with disabilities. The impact of these policies will be enjoyed by many others, including immigrants, aging and illiterate populations, and will open doors to inclusive education, employment and health services.”

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Model Digital Accessibility Policies Presented at the United Nations](http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_82)

[http://g3ict.org/press/press\_releases/press\_release/p/id\_82]

Download: [*Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report*](http://g3ict.org/resource_center/publications_and_reports/p/productCategory_whitepapers/subCat_7/id_326)

[http://g3ict.org/resource\_center/publications\_and\_reports/p/productCategory\_whitepapers/subCat\_7/id\_326]

**NCD Observed Int’l Day of Persons with Disabilities with Recommendations**

December 3, 2014 – The National Council on Disability (NCD) observed the 2014 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) with a statement recognizing the legislative, regulatory, technological, and economic opportunities for improvement that still exist for people with disabilities. Acknowledging the IDPD theme, NCD recognized that enhancements in connectivity and access through technology is not a benefit equally shared by all people. Citing their 2011 publication, "The Power of Digital Inclusion: Technology's Impact on Employment and Opportunities for People with Disabilities,” NCD specified that “incidence of poverty, lack of educational and/or employment opportunities” inhibit many people with disabilities from realizing the same benefits of technology, and consequently a higher standard of living, available to non-disabled persons.

Reaffirming the need for laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act, NCD took the opportunity to restate their support for ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), an international treaty adopted in 2006 that recognizes the need to strengthen the rights of people with disabilities around the world. Stating that 151 of 192 countries that have ratified CRPD, the U.S. Senate has not done so despite the United States signing the Treaty.

In observance of IDPD and in support of CRPD, NCD reiterated recommendations from their 2013 report, “Toward the Full Inclusion of People with Disabilities: Examining the Accessibility of Overseas Facilities and Programs Funded by the United States,” advocating the rights of people with disabilities in the United States and abroad:

* **Apply Federal Disability Standards to Overseas Programs and Employment.**
* **Limit Accessibility Waivers and Exceptions in Infrastructure to Avoid Costly Redevelopment Costs.**
* **Provide Clear Accessibility Guidelines for New Infrastructure in Developing Countries.**

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities Observed by the National Council on Disability, an Independent Federal Agency](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/12032014)

[<http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/12032014>]

**Partnership to Promote Web Accessibility & Usability**

December 16, 2014 – My Blind Spot (MBS), a non-profit dedicated to accessibility, education, and advocacy of blind and visually impaired people, is partnering with sitecues by Ai Squared to better serve low vision, diminished vision, and users with print disabilities when accessing the organization’s website. Sitecues by Ai Squared is a turnkey software as a service (SaaS) product, designed to be integrated into existing websites, providing zoom and speech functionality. Using sitecues, the makers of the ZoomText products and Window-Eyes, MBS will allow access without the need of individuals to utilize their own assistive technology.

My Blind Spot Founder and CEO Albert Rizzi stated, “This is a natural partnership, and a simple and very cost effective solution.” With the MBS website already in compliance with the globally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Rizzi stated, “One of the most attractive features of sitecues, we found, is that it provides web accessibility at no cost to end users with low vision.”

For more information about the partnership between My Blind Spot and sitecues by Ai Squared, please visit [http://myblindspot.org](http://www.prweb.net/Redirect.aspx?id=aHR0cDovL215YmxpbmRzcG90Lm9yZw==), [http://www.sitecues.com](http://www.prweb.net/Redirect.aspx?id=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5zaXRlY3Vlcy5jb20=), or the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Website of the Blind and Visually Impaired Becomes More Accessible for all Web Users](http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/12/prweb12392392.htm)

[<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/12/prweb12392392.htm>]

## Upcoming Events

**AFB and Arizona AER Host 2015 Leadership Conference**

December 2014 – The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) and Arizona Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) are jointly hosting the 20*15 Leadership Conference: Rising to the Challenge*. The annual Leadership Conference covers relevant topics in the field of blindness and offers the opportunity for conference attendees to engage technology experts, corporate representatives, educators, and rehabilitation professionals. Registration is now open. The event will be held April 9-11, 2015 at the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel, 50 East Adams Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004. Conference fees are $125 for one day, $200 for two days, and $250 for three days. Rates increase after March 9.

For registration information for the 2015 Leadership Conference: Rising to the Challenge, please click [here](https://www.afb.org/JLTLIRegistration.asp).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference 2015 and the Arizona AER Statewide Conference](http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/events-and-awards/american-foundation-for-the-blind-leadership-conference-2015/123)

[http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/events-and-awards/american-foundation-for-the-blind-leadership-conference-2015/123]

**Society for Disability Studies 2015 Annual Conference**

The Society for Disability Studies (SDS) is holding their 28th annual conference in Atlanta, June 10-13, 2015.  This year's theme, “getting it-right/s,” will address focus areas such as ADA Legacy, Communities / Identities, Critical Design & Technology Studies, Power and Privilege, Professional Development, and Translational Research in Health Sciences and Disability Studies. Each strand will have three to four related events, varying in format (complete panels, individual presentation, topical discussion, workshop, poster, etc.).

The event will be held at Hyatt Regency Atlanta, 265 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 30303. For more information, contact the SDS Atlanta 2015 Program Committee at [sdsconf15@gmail.com](mailto:sdsconf15@gmail.com).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Conference Website](https://www.disstudies.org/conferences/atlanta)

[<https://www.disstudies.org/conferences/atlanta>]

**National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2015**

The National Federation of the Blind announced that their 2015 National Convention will take place July 5-10, 2015 at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The primary function of the national convention is to address policy issues in the upcoming years and officer/board member elections. The NFB convention also provides practical benefits for attendees including seminars for those new to blindness and reviews of the latest adaptive technology for the blind.

The Rosen Centre Hotel is located at: 9840 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819. Hotel reservations can be made at (800) 204-7234 after January 1. Additional information as to meetings, schedule, hotel, etc., may be obtained as it becomes available by visiting the link below.

#### ADDITIONA INFORMATION

[National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2015](https://nfb.org/convention)

[<https://nfb.org/convention>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** November – December 2014

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The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) 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 Amelia Williams [Amelia@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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