Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

September 2014

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# Overview

In September there was legislative activity in the area of disability access, but the legislation was not specific to advanced technology access so the details are not reported in this newsletter. Nevertheless, such legislative advances address important issues and should not go unmentioned. The three Bills introduced by Senator Tom Harkins as part of his “Access for All” agenda for individuals with disabilities include: the *Exercise and Fitness for All Act* [**S. 2888**], the *Universal Home Design Act* [**S. 2889**], and the *Accessible Transportation for All Act* [**S. 2887**].

In regulatory news, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Public Notice [**10-213**] seeking comment on their tentative findings for the *2014 Biennial Report to Congress on the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010* (CVAA). The Wireless RERC responded with comments that addressed various aspects of inclusive and accessible technologies, including:

* Research supporting tentative findings that show an increase in readily available and accessible technologies;
* Information concerning the staffing and training of people who are knowledgeable about assistive technologies and the people who use them;
* Discrepancies among retail staff and retailer knowledge about assistive technologies and;
* The lack of accessible alerting systems.

The FCC also implemented final rules concerning Text-to-911 service. The rules established a compliance date of December 31, 2014 by which Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) providers and other text service providers are expected to be able to support text to-911 service.

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# Regulatory Activities

**FCC Sought Comments on Communications Technology Accessibility**

August 28, 2014 - The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Public Notice [**10-213**] seeking comment on their tentative findings for the *2014 Biennial Report to Congress on the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010* (CVAA). Public comments contributed to the FCC’s assessment of the following: “(1) the level of compliance with the CVAA’s mandates requiring telecommunications and advanced communications services and equipment to be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities; (2) the effect of related recordkeeping and enforcement obligations; and (3) the extent to which accessibility barriers still exist with respect to new communications technologies.” The final report was submitted by the FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) to Congress on October 8, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Seeks Comment on Its Tentative Findings about the Accessibility of Communications Technologies for the 2014 Biennial Report Under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0828/DA-14-1255A1.pdf)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\_Releases/Daily\_Business/2014/db0828/DA-14-1255A1.pdf]

**FCC Reminds Video Program Distributors About Emergency Info Regulations**

September 10, 2014 – The FCC issued a Public Notice [**DA 14-1312**] to remind video programming distributors of their obligation to make emergency information accessible to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired in accordance with section 79.2 of the FCC’s [47 C.F.R.] regulations. The notice applies to “broadcasters, cable operators, satellite television services, and any other distributor of video programming” as specified by the Code of Federal Regulations. Under section 79.2, video programming distributors must make emergency information that is primarily intended for distribution to an audience in the geographic area in which the emergency is occurring accessible; and clarifies that those outside of the affected areas should also be notified with accessible information as relocation may be necessary.

The Public Notice additionally addresses information regarding how consumers file complaints for noncompliance with this obligation. FCC rules specify that emergency information provided in the audio portion of programming be made accessible using closed captioning, open captioning, crawls or scrolls that appear on the screen, with additional placement regulations.

#### Additional Information

[Reminder Regarding Video Programming Distributors’ Obligation to Make Emergency Information Accessible to Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard Of Hearing, Blind, Or Visually Impaired](http://www.fcc.gov/document/reminder-about-obligation-make-emergency-information-accessible)

[http://www.fcc.gov/document/reminder-about-obligation-make-emergency-information-accessible]

**Text to 911 and Next Generation 911: Final Rules**

September 16, 2014 – The FCC published the *Facilitating the Deployment of Text to 911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications; Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment* [**PS Dockets No. 11–153, 10–255; FCC 14–118**] in the Federal Register this month, summarizing the *Second Report and Order* and setting the effective date for the rules as October 16, 2014. In the report, the FCC established a compliance date of December 31, 2014 by which Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) providers and other text service providers are expected to be able to support text to-911 service. These rules and aggressive timeline speak to the FCC’s commitment to accessible emergency services: “The need to provide text to-911 service in a timely manner is made more pressing...because of the unique value of text-to-911 for the millions of Americans with hearing or speech disabilities, and because of the crucial role it can play in protecting life and property.”

However, work remains to be done and the FCC is seeking additional comment in the *Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FNPRM)portion of the document*.* In the FNPRM, the FCC is seeking comment on technical issues related to: enhanced location information provision, text-to-911 support while roaming, and future capabilities. The submitted comments will inform the FCC of industry and technology-related issues and assist with enhancing the service. Comments should be submitted on or before October 16, 2014, with reply comments by November 17, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[Final Rule: Facilitating the Deployment of Text to 911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications; Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-16/pdf/2014-21851.pdf)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-16/pdf/2014-21851.pdf>]

[Further notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Facilitating the Deployment of Text to 911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications; Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-16/pdf/2014-21852.pdf)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-16/pdf/2014-21852.pdf>]

**FCC Seeks Comment on Waiving E-Reader Accessibility Rules**

September 26, 2014 – The FCC released a Public Notice [**CG Docket No. 10-213**]seeking comment on the Coalition of E-Reader Manufacturers’ petition for an extension of the FCC’s waiver of accessibility rules for basic e-readers, stating that “e-readers are single-purpose reading devices that consumers use for accessing text-based works (i.e., reading), not for other purposes, such as ACS.” The FCC had previously granted a waiver of ACS accessibility rules until January 28, 2015, for basic e-readers. The class of basic e-readers defined in the waiver included all mobile electronic devices capable of accessing ACS, “designed primarily for the purpose of reading text-based digital works, such as books and periodicals, and meets each of the following requirements:

1. The device has no LCD screen, but rather utilizes a screen that is designed to optimize reading.
2. The device has no camera.
3. The device is not offered or shipped to consumers with built-in ACS client applications and the device manufacturer does not develop ACS applications for its respective device, but the device may be offered or shipped to consumers with a browser and social media applications.
4. The device is marketed to consumers as a reading device and promotional material about the device does not tout the capability to access ACS.”

The deadline to submit comments is October 27, 2014, while reply comments are requested by November 5, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[Request for Comment on Petition for Extension of Class Waiver of Commission’s Rules for Access to Advanced Communications Services and Equipment by People with Disabilities](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0926/DA-14-1403A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0926/DA-14-1403A1.pdf> ]

## Publications & Reports

**The ADA & Other Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities**

September 2014 – The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) released a new technical assistance publication about federal laws that protect the rights of voters with disabilities. The publication included information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Voting Rights Act, the National Voter Registration Act and the Help America Vote Act. With the purpose of protecting voter rights and providing a fair process for people with disabilities, the document guides states, election officials, and poll workers on laws in place to ensure accessible and equal rights for those voters.

#### Additional Information

[The Americans with Disabilities Act and Other Federal Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities](http://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.pdf)

[http://www.ada.gov/ada\_voting/ada\_voting\_ta.pdf]

**Senate HELP Committee Reports on Overcoming Economic Barriers for People with Disabilities**

September 18, 2014 – The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) released their Majority Committee Staff Report this month addressing the economic barriers that people with disabilities experience. The report, *Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming the Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities*, highlighted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other policy changes for inclusive and accessible services; and brought attention to various obstacles in economic development for the disability community. It referenced statistics that suggest individuals with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty and experience higher rates of unemployment than other groups. The report also addressed cultural biases, support programs that facilitate the transition to the middle class, suggested procedures for applying/reapplying for support, and the availability of accessible housing and transportation.

#### Additional Information

[Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming the Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities](http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/HELP%20Committee%20Disability%20and%20Poverty%20Report.pdf)

[<http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/HELP%20Committee%20Disability%20and%20Poverty%20Report.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

**Survey Results: Web Accessibility Practitioners**

September 3, 2014 – The Web Accessibility in Mind (WebAIM) Survey of Web Accessibility Practitioners results are now available. Conducted in July 2014, the survey collected data from 900 respondents within the web accessibility field. The survey focused on practitioner demographics, roles, technology preferences, certifications, and various other aspects of web accessibility efficacy. Some of the details of the survey findings include:

* Professionals in the web accessibility field are generally better paid and better educated than those in broader web design and development.
* Women and people with disabilities are represented in a larger amount than in other technology fields.
* 41.5% of respondents without disabilities use Chrome compared to only 16.6% of those with disabilities.
* The screen readers used by web accessibility practitioners differ from the general screen reader user population.
* There is a disparity between what motivates web accessibility practitioners and what they say motivates their organizations to implement accessibility.

#### Additional Information

[Survey of Web Accessibility Practitioners Results](http://webaim.org/projects/practitionersurvey/)

<http://webaim.org/projects/practitionersurvey/>

**Call For Papers: W3C Web Accessibility Symposium**

September 2014 – The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Research and Development Working Group (RDWG) invites researchers, professionals, and users with disabilities to participate in their online symposium on *Accessible Way-Finding Using Web Technologies*, scheduled for December 3, 2014. Accompanying the invitation is a call for papers encouraging contributors to examine issues, technology, apps, and solutions that will assist people with disabilities when navigating the web and the world. Accepted papers will be published online as part of the symposium proceedings. The deadline for submissions is October 20, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[Accessible Way-Finding Using Web Technologies, Online Symposium 3 December 2014](http://www.w3.org/WAI/RD/2014/way-finding/cfp.html)

[http://www.w3.org/WAI/RD/2014/way-finding/cfp.html]

**ODEP Announces $8.4M in Continued Funding to Improve Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities**

September 11, 2014 – The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) announced in a news release that the office would continue funding organizations that improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. A total of $8,422,574 will be dedicated to entities, including: the Add Us In initiative, the Institute for Educational Leadership to operate the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, the National Disability Institute to operate the National Center on Leadership for Employment and Advancement of Citizens with Disabilities, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America to operate the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, and West Virginia University Research Corp to operate the Job Accommodation Network.

Recognizing that people with disabilities have skills needed in the workforce, the U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez stated, "These federal grants will help connect these workers with employers and put them on the path to economic self-sufficiency."

#### Additional Information

[$8.4M in continued funding to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities announced by US Labor Department](http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep/ODEP20141699.htm)

[<http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep/ODEP20141699.htm> ]

**Video Conferencing Enhancement for People with Disabilities**

September 29, 2014 – Blue Jeans Network deployed a new feature to enhance video conference accessibility for people with disabilities. Available on Android and iOS devices, the Blue Jeans web app has been updated to extend its service to customers with hearing impairment, blindness and/or low vision, cognitive disabilities, access and functional limitations, and other abilities. The app’s enhancement of accessibility features include:

1. Distance Learning
2. Interpreter Services
3. Compatibility with screen readers

#### Additional Information

[Blue Jeans Network Adds Key Features To Enhance Video Conferencing Accessibility to Customers with Disabilities](https://bluejeans.com/press-releases/blue-jeans-network-adds-key-features-to-enhance-video-conferencing)

[https://bluejeans.com/press-releases/blue-jeans-network-adds-key-features-to-enhance-video-conferencing]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**App Update: IDEAL Currency Identifier**

September 8, 2014 – IDEAL Group Apps4Android released an update for the “IDEAL Currency Identifier” app this month. Created to make currency more accessible to people with disabilities, the app’s new features allow users to identify notes more quickly and recognize the redesigned $100 note. Developed with support from the Wireless RERC’s App Factory and NIDRR, the app is free and available for download at the [Google Play Store](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.ideal.currencyid).

Jim Mueller, Wireless RERC App Factory Director, expressed his excitement about the update: “We’re glad to have been a part of this effort to make currency more accessible and to make mobile wireless technologies more useful for people of all ages and abilities.”

#### Additional Information

[App Enables Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals to Identify U.S. Currency Notes with Android Smartphone](http://www.apps4android.org/?p=4778)

[<http://www.apps4android.org/?p=4778>]

**Wireless RERC Comments on FCC 2014 Biennial Report**

September 11, 2014 – Georgia Tech’s Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP), in collaboration with the Wireless RERC, submitted comments to an FCC Public Notice [**CG Docket No. 10-213**] asking for comments on the tentative findings about the accessibility of communication technologies. Released on August 28, 2014, the Public Notice requested comments assessing the extent to which telecommunications and advanced communications services and technology have complied with the T*wenty-first Century Video and Communications Accessibility Act* (CVAA) mandates, related recordkeeping and enforcement obligations, and existing accessibility barriers for communications technologies. Georgia Tech’s CACP and the Wireless RERC submitted comments addressing various aspects of inclusive business practices and accessible technologies and features, including:

* Research supporting tentative findings that show an increase in accessible technologies;
* Information concerning the staffing and training of people who are knowledgeable about assistive technologies and the people who use them;
* Discrepancies among retail staff and retailer knowledge about assistive features and;
* The lack of accessible notification features.

#### Additional Information

Comments of Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP) and the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC)

[http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7522088963]

**Wireless RERC Researchers among Recipients of Nearly $1.85M in Funding from Dept. of Labor**

September 30, 2014 – Georgia Tech’s Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP), and home of the Wireless RERC, was among the awardees of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) cooperative agreement to establish a National Employer Policy, Research and Technical Assistance Center. The Agreement will be led by The Viscardi Center in Albertson, New York, and partners include the [United States Business Leadership Network](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1nFj1Hj&exitTitle=www.usbln.org); The George Washington University's [Graduate School of Education & Human Development](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1pogImQ&exitTitle=www.gwu.edu); the [World Institute on Disability](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1ACH75G&exitTitle=www.wid.org); the [Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1qRJX0I&exitTitle=www.disabilitypolicycenter.org); the [National Conference of State Legislatures](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1qRJYC5&exitTitle=www.ncsl.org), in coordination with the [National Governors Association](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://bit.ly/1rAHZpr&exitTitle=www.nga.org); and the Georgia Institute of Technology's [Center for Advanced Communications Policy](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://b.gatech.edu/1v0rYJJ&exitTitle=www.gatech.edu) and [Scheller College of Business](http://www.dol.gov/cgi-bin/leave-dol.asp?exiturl=http://b.gatech.edu/1nFjw4b&exitTitle=www.gatech.edu). Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business will address, among other things, helping employers recognize the unique benefits of employees with disabilities.

The National Employer Policy, Research and Technical Assistance Center goals are to assist employers with “recruiting, hiring, retaining and promoting people with disabilities by:

1. Analyzing employer research, policies and practices related to disability employment;

2. Researching effective employer engagement strategies; and

3. Developing and providing outreach and technical assistance to targeted employers, such as federal agencies, federal contractors, small businesses and state governments.”

#### Additional Information

[Nearly $1.85M in funding to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities awarded by US Labor Department](http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep/ODEP20141797.htm)

[<http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/odep/ODEP20141797.htm>]

# Upcoming Events

## 17th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) will host the 17th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference from November 17 – 21, 2014 in Westminster, Colorado. The conference will offer those within higher education and industry the opportunity to participate in discussions and obtain information on the use of accessible media, adoption of universal design practices, and compliance with accessibility policies. Registration for the event is now open and can be accessed [here](https://www.cvent.com/events/accessing-higher-ground-2014/registration-a9f740ba394c448881392e12b039009f.aspx?r=112099f0-8853-4544-9d51-5f114cc5a47e).

#### Additional Information

[17th Annual Accessing Higher Ground](http://accessinghigherground.org/index.html)

[<http://accessinghigherground.org/index.html>]

## 2014 Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics and Research-to-Policy Roundtable

The Disability Statistics and Demographics Rehabilitation and Research Training Center (StatsRRTC) announced two upcoming events in the Capitol Hill area this December: the Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics release briefing and the Fourth Annual Research-to-Policy Roundtable meeting. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014, as both events plan to engage attendees with presentations and dialogue. The Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics briefing and workshop will be held from 9:00am -10:30am,. From 10:30am – Noon. There will also be a presentation by the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project: Health and Health Care Disparities Among Individuals with Disabilities. The Research-to-Policy Roundtable meeting is scheduled from 1:30pm - 3:30pm. The roundtable will give attendees the opportunity to discuss the many ways that research can assist in developing programs and policies that support individuals with disabilities. Registration will open for these events in September. For more information, please click the link below.

#### Additional Information

[2014 Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics and Research-to-Policy Roundtable](http://www.researchondisability.org/statsrrtc/event-detail/2014/08/21/2014-annual-compendium-of-disability-statistics-and-research-to-policy-roundtable)

[<http://www.researchondisability.org/statsrrtc/event-detail/2014/08/21/2014-annual-compendium-of-disability-statistics-and-research-to-policy-roundtable>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** September 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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