

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

April 2017

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# Overview

In April, the United States Senate passed a resolution [**S.Res.122**], designating April as National 9-1-1 Education Month. The resolution acknowledges modernizing the system, access for people with disabilities via a variety of methods, and public education, including children, on how and when to use 9-1-1. The Resolution calls attention to the various issues facing the public, government and industry stakeholders. Though April is past, awareness and education efforts are ongoing. By example, the FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau announced the re-charter of the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC). Selected members will carry out the mission of CSRIC by making recommendations on issues such as Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), emergency alerting, and national security/emergency preparedness communications systems. Mark Fletcher and Richard L. Ray have been appointed to lead the FCC Disability Advisory Committee’s (DAC) Emergency Communications Subcommittee. The DAC assists the FCC with creating inclusive policy recommendations, and provides an avenue for stakeholders, including people with disabilities, to present concerns and ideas to the FCC.

In Wireless RERC News, the recently published book, *Disability and Social Media: Global Perspectives*, includes a chapter co-authored by Assistant Professor, Dr. DeeDee Bennett (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Wireless RERC Project Director, Dr. Paul M.A. Baker, and Wireless RERC, Principal Investigator, Dr. Helena Mitchell. Chapter 9, *New media and accessible emergency communications: A United States-based meta-analysis*, includes a discussion of accessibility and usability of new media platforms, and provides strategies for implementing accessibility into emergency information delivered via social media.

In keeping with activities in the mobile emergency communications space, Wireless RERC researchers, Salimah LaForce and Ben Lippincott, and consultant, Kay Chiodo (Deaf Link), will present at the Pacific ADA Center and the ADA National Network Learning Session on May 11, 2017, from 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm EST. The Emergency Preparedness webinar series focus on key strategies and approaches to emergency management, preparedness, and inclusion of people with disabilities. Learning objectives understanding (1) the use of wireless emergency communications tools by people with disabilities, as well as their expressed needs and preferences; (2) emergency message content tips that improve accessibility, trust, and reliability of emergency information; (3) "How-to's" for subscribing and enabling accessible emergency alerts on Android and iOS devices for people with disabilities; (4) recommendations for trustworthy apps, internet resources, and social media feeds related to accessible emergency alerts; and (5) how to effectively alert members of the Deaf community. [Register here to attend this webinar.](http://adapresentations.org/registration.php)

This issue also includes news about the Partnership for Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT), a Make-A-Thon to develop prototypes for people with disabilities, and more.

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

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# Legislative Activities

**Designation of April as National 9-1-1 Education Month**

April 25, 2017 – The United States Senate passed a resolution designating April as National 9-1-1 Education Month [**S.Res.122**].  The Resolution passed the Senate unanimously without any amendments.  The Nation’s 9-1-1 centers answer more than 650,000 calls a day, over 200 million callers per year. The callers are as diverse as the nation’s population including people with disabilities and children. The resolution acknowledges modernizing the system, access for people with disabilities via a variety of methods, and public education, including children, on how and when to use 9-1-1. Following are a few lines (verbatim) from the Resolution.

* Whereas it is important that policymakers at all levels of government understand the importance of 9–1–1, how the 9–1–1 system works, and the steps that are needed to modernize the 9–1–1 system;
* Whereas the 9–1–1 system is the connection between the eyes and ears of the public and the emergency response system in the United States and is often the first place emergencies of all magnitudes are reported, making 9–1–1 a significant homeland security asset;
* Whereas a growing segment of the population of the United States, including individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, or who have speech disabilities, is increasingly communicating with nontraditional text, video, and instant messaging communications services and expects those services to be able to connect directly to 9–1–1;
* Whereas the growth and variety of means of communication, including mobile and Internet Protocol-based systems, impose challenges for accessing 9–1–1 and implementing an enhanced 9–1–1 system and require increased education and awareness about the capabilities of different means of communication;
* Whereas people of all ages use 9–1–1 and it is critical to educate people on the proper use of 9–1–1;…
* Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate--(1) designates April 2017 as ``National 9-1-1 education Month''; and (2) urges governmental officials, parents, teachers, school administrators, caregivers, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate ceremonies, training events, and activities.

The Resolution is meant to call attention to the various issues facing the public, government and industry stakeholders. Though April is past, awareness and education efforts are ongoing.

#### Additional Information:

[S.Res.122 - A resolution designating April 2017 as "National 9-1-1 Education Month."](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/122/text/ats?overview=closed&format=txt)

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/122/text/ats?overview=closed&format=txt>

[PDF] [S.Res.122 - A resolution designating April 2017 as "National 9-1-1 Education Month."](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/122/text/ats?overview=closed&format=txt)

[<https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/sres122/BILLS-115sres122is.pdf>]

[9-1-1.GOV](https://www.911.gov/index.html)

[<https://www.911.gov/index.html>]

[9-1-1 for Kids](http://www.911forkids.com/)

[<http://www.911forkids.com/>]

# Regulatory Activities

**FCC Re-charters Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council**

April 10, 2017 – The FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau announced the re-charter of the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC or Council).  The Council provides advice and recommendations to the FCC to improve the security, reliability, and interoperability of the nation’s communications systems.  This is the sixth time the CSRIC will convene for a two-year term.  The Council is expected to begin summer of 2017. The FCC posted a *Public Notice* [**DA 17-343**]seeking members and a Chairperson for the Council.  Selected members will carry out the mission of CSRIC by making recommendations on issues such as communication systems, Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), emergency alerting, and national security/emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications.

Council meetings will be open to the public, and notification will be published in appropriate locations including the Federal Register.  These public meetings will be accessible to individuals with disabilities. To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov) or call the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at  (Voice) 202-418-0530, (TTY) 202-418-0432.

#### Additional Information:

[*Public Notice* [**DA 17-343**]](https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-recharters-csric-and-accepting-membership-nominations)

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-recharters-csric-and-accepting-membership-nominations>

**Richard Ray and Mark Fletcher to Co-Chair the FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee - Emergency Communications Subcommittee**

April 05, 2017 - Mark Fletcher and Richard L. Ray have been appointed to help lead the FCC Disability Advisory Committee’s (DAC) Emergency Communications Subcommittee. Richard is the ADA Technology Access Coordinator at the City of Los Angeles’s Department of Disability.  Mark is the Chief Architect – Worldwide Public Safety Solutions at Avaya. Richard and Mark have made numerous contributions in emergency communications to FCC committees regarding equal access for people with disabilities. The DAC assists the FCC with understanding issues and creating inclusive policy recommendations.  The Committee also provides an avenue for stakeholders including people with disabilities to present concerns and ideas to the Commission.  The Emergency Communications subcommittee has been specifically tasked with:

1. developing recommendations on integrating real-time text into emergency communication systems, and
2. prioritizing emergency information conveyed aurally on television through the secondary audio stream, which is necessary to ensure that people who are blind or visually impaired have access to such information.

The subcommittee has a number of representatives working towards equal access.  Members include representatives from AT&T, Verizon, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), CTIA, and the Center for Advanced Communications Policy and Wireless Inclusive Technologies (WIT) Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC).

#### Additional Information:

[DAC](https://www.fcc.gov/general/disability-advisory-committee)

[<https://www.fcc.gov/general/disability-advisory-committee>]

If utilizing a screen reader to access the link below, use Mozilla Firefox.

[Avaya Press Release](https://telecomreseller.com/2017/04/05/avaya-executive-to-co-chair-the-disability-advisory-committee-emergency-communications-subcommittee/)   
[<https://telecomreseller.com/2017/04/05/avaya-executive-to-co-chair-the-disability-advisory-committee-emergency-communications-subcommittee/>]

**Formation Of The Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force**

April 3, 2017 – The FCC’s Chairman, Ajit Pai, announced the formation of the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force.  The Task Force was created to oversee the Universal Service Fund-related auctions, including the Connect America Fund Phase II (CAF-II) and Mobility Fund II (MF-II).  Over two billion dollars will be used to expand 4G LTE mobile coverage across rural America and on tribal lands. The Director of this FCC Task Force will be Chelsea Fallon.  Deputy Directors will be Michael Janson and Kirk Burgee.  Chief of Staff for the Task Force will be Thom Parisi.  Task Force members will also include senior leaders from across the agency, including representatives from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, the Wireline Competition Bureau, the Office of Strategic Policy and Analysis, the Office of the Managing Director, and the Office of General Counsel.  New funding will be allocated to the project over the next ten years.

Chairman Pai said, “I’m pleased that we continue to move forward aggressively to close the digital divide in the United States. The Task Force I announce today will help ensure that taxpayer funds are allocated efficiently for rural broadband deployment and that all Americans who want Internet access are able to get it…Commencing these auctions as soon as possible is a top priority for the Commission as we seek to close the digital divide…we must engage with the public and be as transparent as possible throughout the duration of these two auctions…I thank in advance Chelsea, Michael, Kirk, Thom, and all of the FCC staff involved in this effort for all of their hard work.  I look forward to seeing their progress in the months ahead.”

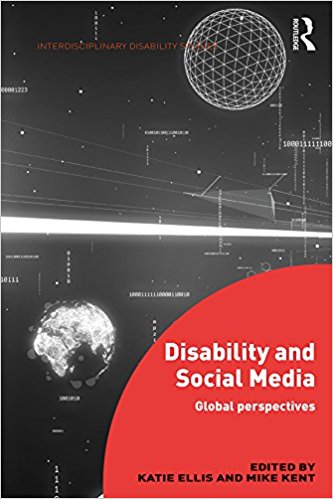
The availability of 4G LTE mobile coverage in all areas across America will provide access to more Americans, including people with disabilities. Access to mobile coverage enables people with disabilities to have access to information and communications through means of adaptive devices that rely on an internet connection. Otherwise, without the coverage, levels of independence for people with disabilities are not as readily attainable.

#### Additional Information:

[FCC News: Chairman Pai Announces Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force](https://www.fcc.gov/document/chairman-pai-announces-rural-broadband-auctions-task-force)

[<https://www.fcc.gov/document/chairman-pai-announces-rural-broadband-auctions-task-force>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Disability and Social Media: Global Perspectives**

Recently published in hardcover, *Disability and Social Media: Global Perspectives*, includes a chapter co-authored by Assistant Professor, Dr. DeeDee Bennett (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Wireless RERC Project Director, Dr. Paul M.A. Baker, and Wireless RERC, Principal Investigator, Dr. Helena Mitchell. Chapter 9, *New media and accessible emergency communications: A United States-based meta-analysis*, includes a discussion of accessibility and usability of new media platforms, and provides strategies for implementing accessibility into emergency information delivered via social media. One reviewer of the book (*Gerard Goggin, University of Sydney, Australia)* commented, “This pioneering volume gives us a widescreen account of the profound, complex, and fast-moving world of disability and social media. Essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the cutting-edge of Internet, communication, and society, not to mention the rich area of disability which opens up new perspectives on key questions in technology, design, participation, democracy, and social justice.”

#### Additional Information:

[Routledge Press](https://www.routledge.com/Disability-and-Social-Media-Global-Perspectives/Ellis-Kent/p/book/9781472458452)

[<https://www.routledge.com/Disability-and-Social-Media-Global-Perspectives/Ellis-Kent/p/book/9781472458452>]

**Webinar: Clear & Effective Emergency Communications over Wireless Devices**

Wireless RERC researchers, Salimah LaForce and Ben Lippincott, and consultant, Kay Chiodo (Deaf Link), will present at the Pacific ADA Center and the ADA National Network Learning Session on May 11, 2017, from 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm EST. The Emergency Preparedness webinar series focus on key strategies and approaches at various levels (federal, state, and local) toward emergency management and preparedness and the inclusion of people with disabilities. [Register here to attend this webinar.](http://adapresentations.org/registration.php) Following is a description and learning objectives.

During an emergency, alert and warning officials need to provide the public with life-saving emergency messages that inform those in the impacted area and compel them to take protective actions. Emergency information is not always presented in formats accessible to people with different levels of sensory, cognitive and physical disabilities. Likewise, the devices on which they receive emergency information are not always optimized for use with emergency information tools such as WEA, subscription-based alerting systems, or local and state apps (e.g. Ready Georgia). This webinar will address composing message content and delivery format features that can enhance the accessibility of the information to people with disabilities. We will also cover smartphone features that can improve the accessibility of emergency messages. The webinar will close with a description and demonstration of an accessible system, Deaf Link's Accessible Hazard Alert System (AHAS).

Learning objectives:

* Learn about the use of wireless emergency communications tools by people with disabilities, as well as their expressed needs and preferences.
* Understand the emergency message content tips that improve accessibility, trust, and reliability of emergency information.
* Understand the "How-to's" for subscribing and enabling accessible emergency alerts on Android and iOS devices for people with disabilities.
* Understand the recommendations for trustworthy apps, internet resources, and social media feeds related to accessible emergency alerts
* Expanded understanding of how to effectively alert members of the Deaf community.

#### Additional Information:

[Emergency Preparedness Webinar Registration](http://adapresentations.org/registration.php)

[<http://adapresentations.org/registration.php>]

**Updated Resources on Accessible Emergency Communications**

April 2017 – The Wireless RERC updated four handouts that serve as resources for people with disabilities, emergency managers, and other stakeholders to raise awareness, as well as provide actionable information, on how to ensure emergency information reaches the whole community. The handouts address optimizing smartphones to receive and react to Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) messages, how to ensure access to the Deaf population, and technology, policy, and training considerations for all stakeholders. The documents are brief handouts. Feel free to share within your organization and communities. Following are links and descriptions of each document:

[**Need to Know Information about Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/need-know-information-about-wireless-emergency-alerts-wea)

This document provides need to know information about WEA. It explains what a WEA is, who WEA providers are, your rights regarding WEA and what you should do to access WEA. Remember, WEA messages can save lives. Do not ignore them!

[**Apps for Enhancing Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) Access**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/apps-enhancing-wireless-emergency-alerts-wea-access)

This document provides a description of some apps that can be used to enhance WEA access. It explains different apps, their features and where you can locate them to better understand WEA messages and aid in responding to WEA the messages appropriately. Provided are links to more information for each app.

[**Common Misconceptions Regarding People who are Deaf & Rely on American Sign Language**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/common-misconceptions-regarding-people-who-are-deaf-rely-american-sign-language)

This document provides common misconceptions regarding people who are Deaf and rely on American Sign Language (ASL) and their access to emergency information.

[**12 Considerations for Accessible Emergency Communications**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/updated-2017-12-considerations-accessible-emergency-communications)

This document features twelve considerations for accessible emergency communications to help guide emergency communications planning for people with disabilities and those with access and functional needs. Also provided is a list of websites and resources with specific information concerning technology, policy, training and education.

# Other Items of Interest

**New Resource Offers Guidance on Accessible Technology-Related Public Policy**

April 2017 – The Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) has a new online resource called “Policy Matters.” PEAT receives funding from the U. S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy and provides information to various stakeholders (employers and those seeking employment or who are currently employed). The Policy Matters webpage includes articles and videos discussing how legislation and regulations apply to the workplace. The currently featured video is “Accessibility Policy and Corporate Culture.”  Recent articles cover the National Council on Disability’s (NCD) 2016 report to Congress, which makes recommendations for accessible workplace technology. Policy Matters also covers the Section 508 refresh and developments in information and communication technologies.

#### Additional Information:

[Policy Matters](http://www.peatworks.org/Policy-Matters)

[<http://www.peatworks.org/Policy-Matters>]

[PEAT Website](http://www.peatworks.org/Policy-Matters)

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

**Make-A-Thon to Develop Prototypes for People with Disabilities**

April 2017 - Cornell University partnered with the Reut Group’s Tikkun Olam Makers (TOM) and New York City Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities to host a Make-A-Thon on April 21-22, 2017.  The event was held at the Brooklyn Navy Yard’s New Lab.  The goal of the event was to inspire makers to create assistive and affordable solutions for people with disabilities and “Develop hardware and software prototypes that improve inclusiveness for people with disabilities, filling a need where there has been no market or government interest.” To accomplish this goal, maker teams were designed with diversity in mind bringing together coders, developers, engineers, and other people with desired knowledge and enthusiasm to build.  Around 200 people participated with teams of four to ten people.  Participants also included residents with disabilities from Roosevelt Island, where Cornell Tech will open a campus later this year. Jane Swanson, Cornell Tech’s assistant director of government and community relations, commented, “It is an exciting opportunity for our campus as we expect that a number of the people with disabilities the students will be working with will come from Roosevelt Island…It is a chance to directly help our neighbors before our new campus opens.”

TOM was shaped by the idea of an inclusive society and embodies this ideal in multiple ways, according to Gidi Grinstein, founder, and president of Reut Group, which created TOM.  “TOM makeathons are a platform designed to make our entire society more inclusive. It allows the most talented top professionals to contribute the best of their skills toward alleviating the difficulties faced by societies’ most challenged,” Grinstein said.

#### Additional Information:

[Cornell News](http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2017/04/makeathon-develop-prototypes-people-disabilities)

[<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2017/04/makeathon-develop-prototypes-people-disabilities>]

[TOM Global](http://www.nyc.tomglobal.org/)

[<http://www.nyc.tomglobal.org/>]

# Upcoming Events

**2017 M-Enabling Summit**

The M-Enabling Summit will convene from June 13 to June 14, 2017, in Washington, D.C. Summit presenters will cover topics such as robotics, wearables, virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and IoT.

#### Additional Information:

[Conference Registration](http://www.m-enabling.com/conreg.html)

[<http://www.m-enabling.com/conreg.html>]

**RESNA 2017: Annual Conference**

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) will convene their annual conference on June 28 to June 30, 2017, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Session topics will include recent assistive technology developments in the field and the lab concerning cognitive and sensory impairments, computer applications and communications, emerging technology, job and environmental accommodations, public policy and advocacy, and more.

#### Additional Information:

[Conference Registration](http://www.resna.org/news-events/annual-meeting/registration)

[<http://www.resna.org/news-events/annual-meeting/registration>]

**GSMA Mobile World Congress Americas**

Mobile World Congress will convene from September 12 to September 14, 2017, in San Francisco, California. The conference sessions will address core mobile technologies, consumer and industrial applications in the Internet of Things and the intersection of mobile with entertainment, content, and media.

#### Additional Information:

[Conference Registration](https://www.mwcamericas.com/register-plan/register/)

[<https://www.mwcamericas.com/>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** April 2017

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The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) is a monthly newsletter that reports on national public policy events and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities, researchers, policymakers, industry, and advocacy professionals. 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 website 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 Synge Tyson [<synge@cacp.gatech.edu>], or Salimah LaForce [<salimah@cacp.gatech.edu>].

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The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RE5025-01-00).  NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).  The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.