Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

May 2016

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# Overview

In May, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continued efforts to implement the *Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010* (CVAA)*.* TheFCC released and Order [**10-210**] extending the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) until June 30, 2017. NDBEDP, established by the CVAA in 2010 and implemented by the FCC in 2012, is currently a pilot program that provides up to $10 million annually to support organizations that distribute communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind. The FCC is working on a rulemaking that recommends that the program becomes permanent. In other efforts to ensure communications access for people with vision disabilities, the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking [**16-37**] to expand video described programming to people that are blind or have low vision was published in the Federal Register establishing deadlines of June 27, 2016, for comments and July 26, 2016, for reply comments. The proposed rules would allow people who are blind or have visual impairments to fully enjoy popular television shows. Finally, The FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) released a Public Notice [**10-213**], seeking public input on the level of accessibility of communications technologies covered by the CVAA. The report, among other things, will contain evaluations of industry compliance with the CVAA, persistent barriers to access to new current and new technologies, and the impact of the requirements of the CVAA on technology development and deployment.

In Wireless RERC news, The [*Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit Proceedings*](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/Wireless%20RERC%20SoT%20-%20Envisioning%20Inclusive%20Futures%20Summit%20Preceedings.pdf) have been published on the Wireless RERC website. The Summit focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) the consequential futures for people with disabilities. Transformative ideas and common visionary themes addressed wireless technologies and systems that could stimulate inclusive solutions such as robotics, wearables, the Internet of Things, next-generation emergency communications and alerts, and assistive intelligence for auditory and visual navigation. Looking to an inclusive future, not only were research and policy agenda items identified, but also challenges and recommendations on how to reach a future of inclusiveness.

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# Regulatory Activities

**National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program Extended by the FCC**

May 27, 2016 – The FCC released the Order, *In the matter of Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010* [CVAA]*, Section 105, Relay Services for Deaf-Blind Individuals* [**10-210**], which extended the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) until June 30, 2017. The NDBEDP provides up to $10 million annually to support organizations that distribute communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind. Many individuals who have received equipment and training under the NDBEDP have reported that this program has vastly improved their daily lives, significantly enhanced their ability to live independently, and expanded their educational and employment opportunities. NDBEDP, established by the CVAA in 2010 and implemented by the FCC in 2012, is currently a pilot program. However, the FCC is working on a rulemaking that recommends that the program becomes permanent.

#### Additional Information:

[FCC Order [10-210]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0527/FCC-16-69A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0527/FCC-16-69A1.pdf> ]

**FCC Announces Comment Deadlines for Video Description Expansion Notice**

May 27, 2016 - A summary of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to expand the video description rules to ensure access of video described programming to people that are blind or have low vision was published in the Federal Register. This release established deadlines of June 27, 2016, for comments and July 26, 2016, for reply comments. Video description is the addition of audio descriptions of key visual elements of onscreen information or action during pauses in dialogue. This would allow people who are blind or have visual impairments to fully enjoy popular television shows. The NPRM [**16-37**] proposes:

* An increase in the amount of video described programming from 50 hours per calendar quarter to 87.5 hours;
* An increase in the amount of network covered by the rules;
* A rule that requires compliance even if a network loses their top five/ top ten ranking;
* Removal of the pay TV threshold requirement for non-broadcast networks;
* Require customer service representatives with knowledge of video description; and
* Require the electronic filing of petitions for exemptions from the rules.

#### Additional Information:

[Public Notice](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0527/DA-16-596A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0527/DA-16-596A1.pdf>]

[News Release](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0331/DOC-338677A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0331/DOC-338677A1.pdf>]

**Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Seeks Comment on Accessibility of Communication Technologies**

May 23, 2016 - The FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) released a Public Notice [**10-213**], seeking input from the public to inform the preparation of the biennial report required by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA). The report must be submitted by October 8, 2016. The biennial report, in an effort to understand the effectiveness of the CVAA, will contain an assessment of the accessibility of advanced communications technologies covered by the CVAA. The report, among other things, will contain evaluations of:

* The level of compliance with sections 225, 716, 718 of the Communications Act.
* The extent to which any accessibility barriers still exist with respect to new communications technologies.
* The effect of the requirements of section 717 of the Act on the development and deployment of new communications technologies.

#### Additional Information:

[Public Notice [10-213]](http://www.commlawmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/512/2016/05/PN-CVAA-Report-Comment.pdf)

[<http://www.commlawmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/512/2016/05/PN-CVAA-Report-Comment.pdf>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Wireless RERC Summit Proceedings:  Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES**

The [*Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit Proceedings*](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/Wireless%20RERC%20SoT%20-%20Envisioning%20Inclusive%20Futures%20Summit%20Preceedings.pdf) have been published by the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) on our website. The Summit focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) the consequential futures for people with disabilities. The Proceedings concluded that a variety of technological solutions exist whether discussing the present or the future, and more are under development, to facilitate the ability of people with disabilities to engage in life activities. Transformative ideas and common visionary themes addressed wireless technologies and systems that could stimulate inclusive solutions such as robotics, wearables, the Internet of Things, next-generation emergency communications and alerts, and assistive intelligence for auditory and visual navigation. Looking to an inclusive future, not only were research and policy agenda items identified, but also challenges and recommendations on how to reach a future of inclusiveness. Following are a few findings:

* Usability is critical – technology needs to be “out of the box” ready. The design process should be enhanced so that devices are intuitively usable, or conversely, are easily personalizable.
* Education, outreach and awareness efforts should be dynamic and integral to both ongoing and adaptive/changing environments. This is in reference to not only technology but to the changing circumstances of people with disabilities.
* Products and services should be universally designed and also take into account cultural sensitivity.

The visionary theme from the opening to the concluding dialog emphasized: **A transformative future is an inclusive future**. This became the key take-away for reinforcing the Wireless RERC’s commitment to ensure an accessible mobile wireless future for people with disabilities.

[Read the *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit Proceedings*](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/Wireless%20RERC%20SoT%20-%20Envisioning%20Inclusive%20Futures%20Summit%20Preceedings.pdf)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/Wireless%20RERC%20SoT%20-%20Envisioning%20Inclusive%20Futures%20Summit%20Preceedings.pdf>]

[HTML Version](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/post-summit-content)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/post-summit-content>]

**Upcoming Dates for Wireless Independence Now (WIN) - Smartphone Education Workshops for Consumers**

This is the third year the AT&T Corporate Accessibility Technology Office and the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) are conducting workshops for people with disabilities, caregivers, and professionals on how to use accessibility features found on smartphones and tablets.  The 2016 schedule is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| June 13-14 | **Washington, DC** | G3ict M-Enabling |
| June 24 | **Chicago, IL** | Abilities Expo |
| June TBD | **Chicago, IL** | AT&T Store of the Future |
| September 16 | **Boston, MA** | Abilities Expo |
| September TBD | **Boston, MA** | AT&T Store of the Future |
| TBD | **Dallas, TX** | AT&T Store of the Future |
| TBD | **Atlanta, GA** | AT&T Store of the Future |

[**Wireless Independence Now! Workshops**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001XZaDSS8K5hxI_Qwygej9Wp6hSWfGE9pEQuWz1mfdH_adK0ug3ZEkYanq3e5Z7P2XNgtqAOZyVxAUo3M-8-GLS2hq72rx6-c7rWPLtOqrRYjGUK5fX-CeNYA8HjpEbuOC4vx_rocScaHUY7D5sHb8WCYfFNHfe-bz-CEmQMSfeWa-UI9Rv6XWgkEJih1qRZ-I5UzA2GGbYGsIgBNdyK75AIFnleEo6ecTC3L0_W_BcjZ7lhkLRohTsmRmHsa1lbtZYbWc2T3OVtBDIFnuwHZHXsv8xecVkVhSKW8-I4yJ7fPpoNegb-kPNOHZHXXYoxQSKGTUeZhlODdAdJ11-D7iQbtwSqYBl4_M&c=06O8dpagl1FCWl-icOMuYtUj6hzq8DpSE2Qdq23URVURxGgD-UrP6w==&ch=Jq1qdsI7L3hlgsiJnR_l2cDInVdcAPiQCW017m38ZTdiJJjSpur8aw==) are free of charge, open to the public, and are not marketing or sales events. Participants do not need to be AT&T customers in order to attend. CART and Sign Language Interpreters will be provided as needed.

Workshops will review:

* Accessibility features found on smartphones, phablets, and tablets that use Apple or Android Operating Systems
* Accessibility resources for services, devices, and mobile applications
* Ways to improve the accessibility of devices and services

Workshops will focus on accessibility features helpful for the following users:

* People who use hearing aids
* People who use text and video services
* People who have communication difficulties
* People who have difficulty seeing
* People with attention, concentration, or sensory difficulties
* People with dexterity or mobility impairments
* Caregivers and Professionals who assist people with disabilities

#### Additional Information:

[**Check the Wireless RERC's WIN! Workshop webpage**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001XZaDSS8K5hxI_Qwygej9Wp6hSWfGE9pEQuWz1mfdH_adK0ug3ZEkYanq3e5Z7P2XNgtqAOZyVxAUo3M-8-GLS2hq72rx6-c7rWPLtOqrRYjGUK5fX-CeNYA8HjpEbuOC4vx_rocScaHUY7D5sHb8WCYfFNHfe-bz-CEmQMSfeWa-UI9Rv6XWgkEJih1qRZ-I5UzA2GGbYGsIgBNdyK75AIFnleEo6ecTC3L0_W_BcjZ7lhkLRohTsmRmHsa1lbtZYbWc2T3OVtBDIFnuwHZHXsv8xecVkVhSKW8-I4yJ7fPpoNegb-kPNOHZHXXYoxQSKGTUeZhlODdAdJ11-D7iQbtwSqYBl4_M&c=06O8dpagl1FCWl-icOMuYtUj6hzq8DpSE2Qdq23URVURxGgD-UrP6w==&ch=Jq1qdsI7L3hlgsiJnR_l2cDInVdcAPiQCW017m38ZTdiJJjSpur8aw==)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/699?utm_source=Industry%2FCAN+Newsletter_2016-03-30&utm_campaign=Re%3AWireless+2016-03-21&utm_medium=email>]

# Publications/Reports

**Disability Not Included in Study on Diversity in High Tech**

May 2016 - This reports objective was to shed light on employment patterns in the high tech industry related to the diversity. The report explains that employment in computer science and engineering is growing at twice the national average. Hence, the high tech industry and associated occupations are rapidly evolving and new technology has transformed industries not originally considered high tech such as telecommunications and manufacturing. The growth has also changed the functions of numerous occupations. This report aims to add to the public policy discussion by exploring employment trends in the high tech sector using 2014 EEO-1 data, focusing on two issues: (1) the supply of labor with appropriate skills and (2) the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women and minority workers in the relevant labor force. EEO-1 reports filed by employers with more than 100 employees provide data based on race, color, sex and national origin, but do not report data on age or disability. The authors suggest that additional research is necessary to understand the causes and solutions for underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the high tech workforce. Future research should also analyze data on people with disabilities and older adults. A footnote in the report stated, “We found that more than half, 57 percent, had at least one current federal contract in 2014. Because federal contractors are now obligated to collect self-reported disability status, data on the employment of people with disabilities in High Tech firms will be available for future study (this is not a data point collected on EEOC surveys).”

#### Additional Information:

[Read the Report: Diversity in High Tech](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/reports/hightech/upload/diversity-in-high-tech-report.pdf)

[<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/reports/hightech/upload/diversity-in-high-tech-report.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

**Free Access to Digital Accessibility Courses**

May 19, 2016 - Deque Systems is now offering their entire curriculum of online courses in web and digital accessibility to people with disabilities for free. The news release states that the free courses are being offered in response to the fact that people with disabilities face employment discrimination during the hiring process and experience barriers to acquiring the skills necessary for employment. At the same time, the demand for accessibility professional is increasing. Deque's mission is to help achieve digital equality for people with disabilities and empower users with disabilities to become the experts on making the web accessible.

#### Additional Information:

[News Release](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/free-access-to-digital-accessibility-courses-for-people-with-disabilities-on-deque-university-300271153.html)

[<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/free-access-to-digital-accessibility-courses-for-people-with-disabilities-on-deque-university-300271153.html>]

**EEOC Sues Mobile Destination for Disability Discrimination**

May 12, 2016 - Mobile Destination, Inc., a mobile phone retailer in Texas which operates 30 Verizon Wireless stores, allegedly violated Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by withdrawing a worker's job offer because of his disability. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEOC) explained in the complaint that after the individual was extended a job offer by the district manager and completed and passed pre-employment screenings, the vice president of the company would not approve hiring the individual because he used a wheelchair. This alleged conduct violates the ADA, which prohibits job discrimination against individuals with disabilities. "This lawsuit will send a message to employers that EEOC will enforce federal law by prosecuting companies which deny equal opportunity to qualified workers with disabilities," said EEPC Houston Regional Attorney Jim Sacher.

#### Additional Information:

[News Release](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/5-12-16.cfm)

[<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/5-12-16.cfm>]

**New Accessibility Features for Kindle E-Readers**

May 10, 2016 - VoiceView is now available on Kindle e-readers allowing customers with vision disabilities access. VoiceView uses Amazon's natural text-to-speech voices and enables device navigation via speech feedback. Customers will be able to use VoiceView for Kindle with the Audio Adapter - a USB audio dongle that connects headphones or speakers allowing the user to listen and navigate the user interface simultaneously. Customers will receive a credit that will cover the cost of the Audio Adapter, and as a result will not have to pay extra for accessibility features.

Also, a new font option called OpenDyslexic is available to enhance customer's reading experience. According to the press release, Immersion Reading is a powerful tool for young readers, students and readers with disabilities. This tool gives customers the option to read and listen to books simultaneously with real-time text highlighting. Amazon's accessibility team has much more planned and is looking forward to the journey ahead.

#### Additional Information:

[News Post](https://www.amazon.com/p/feature/ch9nzgzhrjh59ty?ref_=aa_navt_3&pf_rd_r=42MENRB3090XR77Q0NFE&pf_rd_p=a086d378-4371-4f73-a78d-a94fffd8de72)

[<https://www.amazon.com/p/feature/ch9nzgzhrjh59ty?ref_=aa_navt_3&pf_rd_r=42MENRB3090XR77Q0NFE&pf_rd_p=a086d378-4371-4f73-a78d-a94fffd8de72>]

**W3C and International Publishing Forum Explore Joining Forces**

May 10, 2016 - The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the International Publishing Forum (IDPF) announced their mutual interest in combining their organizations to more quickly advance publishing technologies on the Open Web Platform by January 2017. Together they share a vision to fully align the publishing industry and core Web Technology. Online book content is becoming highly interactive and accessible with links to videos and images from historical events and original research data. Together they aim to accelerate the development of technology standards to meet the rigorous needs of authors and publishers. Bill McCoy, IDPF Executive Director stated, "Whether it's EPUB content or social marketing and reader engagement, Web technologies are foundational to enabling digital content to be created, distributed globally, and viewed on any Web-enabled device as well as dedicated reading apps and eReader devices." Before they can consolidate, each organization must solicit input from their current membership and draft a Memorandum of Understanding.

#### Additional Information:

[News Release](https://www.w3.org/2016/05/digpub.html.en)

[<https://www.w3.org/2016/05/digpub.html.en>]

**Sprint Announces Wireless Lifeline Services Partnership with i-wireless**

May 2, 2016 - Sprint announced their partnership with i-wireless, LLC as a means to strengthen its position as a leader in the wireless Lifeline services industry. This partnership will merge Sprint's Assurance Wireless and i-wireless' Access Wireless into one entity. Assurance Wireless and Access Wireless are participants in the Lifeline Assistance Program which is designed to ensure quality telecommunications services to low-income consumers at affordable rates. According to the press release, as they transition to broadband, they are excited to help customers participate in today’s digital economy by increasing affordable access to broadband and wireless service. They anticipate this will likewise increase access to employment opportunities, education and healthcare services.

#### Additional Information:

[Sprint Newsroom](http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-announces-wireless-lifeline-services-partnership-with-i-wireless.htm?view_id=5608)

[<http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-announces-wireless-lifeline-services-partnership-with-i-wireless.htm?view_id=5608>]

# Upcoming Events

**Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) 2016**

APSE 2016 will convene in Cincinnati, OH, June 21-23, 2016. The annual National APSE Conference brings together businesses, individuals with disabilities and community leaders from across the country and around the world to network and discuss state-of-the-art strategies to ensure equitable employment for citizens with disabilities.

#### Additional Information:

[Conference Website](http://apse.org/conferences-training/national-conference/)

[<http://apse.org/conferences-training/national-conference/>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** May 2016

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The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) reports on national public policy events and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities, researchers, policymakers, industry, and advocacy professionals. The TDPH 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 Christina Touzet [christina@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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