Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

January 2013

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# Overview

In January, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a *Policy Statement* and *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FNPRM) regarding the rollout of text-to-911. , the FCC urged Commercial Mobile Radio Service providers as well as providers of other text messaging services to enable text-to-911 for their consumers. Complementing the Policy Statement, the FCC issued a 2nd FNPRM seeking comment on a proposed timeframe for text-to-911 deployment, suggesting that the service be made available no later than December 31, 2014. The Policy Statement and FNPRM follow a series of meetings held by the FCC in January which discussed many agenda items, including text-to-911 deployment, establishment of an Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Service National Outreach Program (iTRS-NOP) for video relay service (VRS) and Internet protocol relay service (IP Relay) and technology transition experiments.

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# Regulatory Activities

## FCC Open Meeting Agenda Announced

January 10, 2014 — The FCC held a stakeholders’ meeting regarding the establishment of an Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Service National Outreach Program (iTRS-NOP) for video relay service (VRS) and Internet protocol relay service (IP Relay) on January 17, 2014. The meeting followed a VRS Reform Order issued in June 2013, which requires the selection of “one or more independent iTRS Outreach Coordinators” to participate in a pilot iTRS-NOP. The pilot program will focus on public outreach and will include activities such as establishing clear messaging regarding the purpose and benefits of IP Relay and VRS and “educating the deaf, hard of hearing and speech disability consumers about the broadband adoption programs available to low-income families without access to broadband and VRS.” For those unable to attend the meeting, the broadcast has been archived in “[past events](http://www.fcc.gov/events/itrs-national-outreach-program-stakeholder-meeting-jan-17)” on the FCC website.

#### Additional Information

[Webcast: iTRS National Outreach Program Stakeholder Meeting Jan. 17](http://www.fcc.gov/events/itrs-national-outreach-program-stakeholder-meeting-jan-17)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/events/itrs-national-outreach-program-stakeholder-meeting-jan-17>]

**FCC Extends Comment Deadline: Rulemaking on Closed Captioning of IP-Delivered Video Programming**

January 22, 2014 — The FCC released an *Order in the Matter of Closed Captioning of Internet Protocol-Delivered Video Programming: Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010* [MB Docket No. 11-154]. The Order extends the comment deadline for the *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* released on December 13, 2013, wherein the FCC requested comments on rules regarding the closed captioning of IP-delivered video programming. While the initial comment dates were set for January 27, 2014 for comments and February 26, 2014 for reply comments, the FCC has agreed to extend the comment and reply comment deadline by one week following a request from the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). In their request for an extension, NAB noted that they are currently working to draft comments for a similar docket regarding closed caption quality, “…a one week extension of the video clips comment deadline would enable NAB and others to continue their collaborative work … and to more fully address the issues in the Video Clips Public Notice.”

#### Additional Information

[Public Notice [MB Docket No. 11-154]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0122/DA-14-72A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0122/DA-14-72A1.pdf>]

**FCC Grants Accessibility Waiver for E-Readers**

January 28, 2013 — Following a petition filed by the Coalition of E-Reader Manufacturers, the FCC has issued a class waiver for basic e-readers from section 716, part 14 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA). Part 14 of the FCC’s rules require advanced communications services (ACS) and equipment be accessible to people with disabilities. The waiver is for a narrow class of e-readers with the following features:

* The device has no LCD screen.
* The device has no Camera.
* The device is not offered with built-in email or other similar ACS applications.
* The device is marketed as a reading device and does not advertise the capability to access ACS.

In granting the Coalition’s request, the FCC acknowledged that “this narrow class of e-readers is designed primarily for reading text-based digital works, not for ACS.” The waiver is set to expire on January 28, 2015.

#### Additional Information

[Order [CG Docket No. 10-213]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0128/DA-14-95A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0128/DA-14-95A1.pdf>]

**FCC Open Meeting: the IP Transition and text-to-911**

January 30, 2013 — The FCC held an open meeting regarding the considerations for a Report and Order and Notices of Proposed Rulemaking to address both technology transition experiments and policy goals regarding widespread implementation of public safety measures. Following the meeting the FCC announced the launch of voluntary experiments regarding the technology transitions in communications networks. The experiments will focus on ways to ensure that regardless of technology, public safety communications networks remain functional and that “all Americans have access to affordable communications services” without sacrificing consumer protection. Information from the experiments will be used by the FCC to guide future legal and policy choices. Also resulting from the meeting, the FCC encouraged all text providers to deploy text-to-911. The Commission notes that while the nation’s four largest wireless providers have committed to make text-to-911 available for their customers, the effort to ensure all text providers enable this service is imperative due to “Americans’ increasing reliance on text messaging.” The archived webcast of the meeting and supporting documentation can be accessed at: <http://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-january-2014>.

#### Additional Information

[Archived Webcast](http://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-january-2014)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-january-2014>]

[FCC Press Release: Technology Transition](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0130/DOC-325345A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0130/DOC-325345A1.pdf>]

[FCC Press Release: Text-to-911](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0130/DOC-325351A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0130/DOC-325351A1.pdf>]

**FCC Seeks comment on Text-to-911 Deployment**

January 31, 2013 — The FCC released a *Policy Statement* and *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FNPRM) regarding the rollout of text-to-911. In the statement the FCC highlights that “access to 911 is a core value that translates across communications platforms, including text platforms, and should not be lost or devalued as technology changes.” Accordingly, the FCC urged Commercial Mobile Radio Service providers, as well as providers of other text messaging services, to enable text-to-911 for their consumers. Complementing the Policy Statement, the FCC issued a 2nd FNPRM seeking comment on a proposed timeframe for text-to-911 deployment. The FNPRM suggested that the service be made available no later than December 31, 2014. Regarding the proposed timeframe, the FCC seeks comment on whether the timeframe is feasible and whether all text providers have the technical ability to comply with a mandate. The FCC also seeks comment on longer-term text-to-911 issues, including the ability for emergency texts to provided location information and “delivering text-to-911 over non-cellular data channels.”

#### Additional Information

[Policy Statement and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0131/FCC-14-6A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0131/FCC-14-6A1.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

**National Federation of the Blind Files Suit Against the Department of Transportation**

January 22, 2014 — The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) filed suit against the Department of Transportation (DOT) challenging regulations issued under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) meant to “require that airline check-in kiosks be made accessible to airline passengers who are blind.” The NFB asserts that the regulations, which require 25 percent of airport kiosks to be accessible by 2023, fail to implement the ACAA as Congress intended and that currently kiosks can easily be made accessible by “affixing Braille labels, installing headphone jacks and adding speech software that provides audio prompts to the user.” NFB President, Dr. Marc Maurer, noted, “The regulations will only require 25 percent of these kiosks to be made accessible; apparently 75 percent discrimination against blind people is acceptable to the DOT. The agency also failed to make the information it gathered from airlines available until these regulations were issued, which also violated federal law and denied blind Americans the opportunity to challenge the airlines’ assertions. We are therefore asking the court to strike down the regulations and order the agency to restart the rulemaking process.”

#### Additional Information

[NFB News Release](https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-sues-department-transportation-over-airline-regulations)

[<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-sues-department-transportation-over-airline-regulations>]

**Funding Opportunity for Employment Solutions**

January 24, 2013 — The Kessler Foundation announced that they are currently accepting applications for Signature Employment Grants. The annual grants are awarded to organizations “to fund new pilot initiatives, demonstration projects or social ventures that lead to the generation of new ideas to solve the high unemployment and underemployment of individuals with disabilities.” Applicants may apply for up to two years of funding ranging from $100,000 to $250,000 per year. The deadline to apply is February 7, 2014.

#### Additional Information

[Kessler Call for Proposals](http://kesslerfoundation.org/grantprograms/signatureemploymentgrants.php)

[<http://kesslerfoundation.org/grantprograms/signatureemploymentgrants.php>]

# Publications and Reports

**New Report Highlights Need for Accessibility in Voting**

January 24, 2014 — The Presidential Commission on Election Administration released a report providing recommendations to streamline the voting process. The formation of the Commission follows the 2012 election, where long lines and inaccessibility hindered voters. The Commission’s report highlights that the accommodations made for voters with disabilities or limited English proficiency varies widely with location. Accordingly, the report recommends that all polling places be routinely audited for physical accessibility, while poll workers are provided with additional training to ensure they can answer questions concerning accessibility. To ensure the accessibility of voter registration, the report recommends providing in-home registration online. Theis report also noted the need for advisory groups to ensure that the needs of 35 million Americans with accessibility needs are met.

#### Additional Information

[The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration](https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf)

[<https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Citra: A New Communication App**

January 27, 2014 — The Wells Foundation in partnership with Ohio State University and Columbus Speech and Hearing Center released a new communication app for children and adults with language impairments. Based on a successful prototype using a common, standard database of picture elements, Citra networks and shares communication boards, schedule maker and notes between multiple people providing services to the same child. Therapists, special needs teachers and parents can access the same lesson plans from whatever computer or tablet they use, while a notes log provides constant communications between all caregivers supporting the child. Citra is currently available on [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.citra) and the [App Store](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/citra/id780380229?mt=8).

Citra was made possible, in part, by the Wireless RERC’s App Factory and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

#### Additional Information

[Citra](http://wirelessrerc.org/node/235)

[<http://wirelessrerc.org/node/235>]

[App Store: Citra](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/citra/id780380229?mt=8)

[<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/citra/id780380229?mt=8>]

[Google Play: Citra](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.citra)

[<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.citra>]

# Upcoming Events

**29th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference**

The Center on Disability at California State University will host the 2014 CSUN Conference in San Diego, California at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel from March 17 – 22, 2014.

Additional Information

[CSUN Conference Registration](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2014/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1>]

**European Knowledge Tree Technology Group Conference**

The European Knowledge Tree Technology Group (EKTG) Conference will be held on March 24-25, 2014 at the London School of Economics. EKTG is an ad hoc group with members representing many fields, including technology, finance, service and policy. The 2014 EKTG Conference will draw from these fields to discuss the use of technology in healthcare and the legal, ethical and regulatory issues that may result. Those interested in attending can register [here](file:///C:\Users\salimah\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\IGUYAEWB\European%20Knowledge%20Tree%20Technology%20Group%202014%20Conference).

Additional Information

[European Knowledge Tree Technology Group Conference](http://www.aaliance2.eu/node/172)

[<http://www.aaliance2.eu/node/172>]

[Conference Registration](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/european-knowledge-tree-group-2014-conference-tickets-9904857696)

[<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/european-knowledge-tree-group-2014-conference-tickets-9904857696>]

**2014 Disability Policy Seminar**

The 2014 Disability Seminar will be held in Washington, D.C. on April 7 – 9. The Seminar will offer individuals a chance to hear from “leading public policy experts, disability advocates and Congressional staff” as they discuss key topics relating to the disability community including Medicaid, Employment, Education and Health Care. Registration for the event will open soon, and any questions can be sent to Robin Powers at <mailto:robin@cmig.com>.

Additional Information

[2014 Disability Policy Seminar](http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173)

[<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

January 2013

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org>].

For further information on items summarized in this report, or if you have items of interest that you would like included in future editions, please contact this edition’s editors, Braeden Benson [braeden@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu].

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