Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

June 2014



# Overview

The 24th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is approaching, and preparations are underway to celebrate achievements and further educate people, businesses and organizations on how to further realize the ADA’s goals. To that end, the Southeast ADA Center of the ADA National Network has released an ADA Anniversary Tool Kit with information on the background of the ADA, current disability statistics, and other resources helpful for ADA implementation.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) devoted a lot of effort in June towards advancing accessibility with regards to closed captioning, video description, communication services and even internally at the FCC. Regarding the latter, the FCC launched a service they are calling the “ASL Consumer Support Line,” a video-based support line that enables deaf and hard of hearing consumers who communicate via American Sign Language (ASL) to file formal complaints and queries in ASL. In preparation for their 2014 Biennial Report to Congress, the Commission sought input on the accessibility of equipment used with non-mobile and mobile services, including: analog telephone handsets, digital telephone handsets, cordless phones used with landline and interconnected VoIP services, basic mobile phones, and smart phones.

In July, the FCC will vote to determine if online video clips will be included in closed captioning mandates. This is on the heels of a Public Notice denying 16 petitions for exemption from closed captioning rules. Regarding video description, the FCC’s Media Bureau released a Report to Congress which addressed the status, benefits and cost of video description. The report also highlighted that while much work has been done to ensure compliance with the rules, consumers note the need to expand video description to more programming, including those provide online.

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

[Legislative Activities](#legislativeactivities)

[Regulatory Activities](#regulatoryactivities)

[Other Items of Interest](#otheritemsofinterest)

[Wireless RERC Updates](#wirelessrercupdates)

[Upcoming Events](#Upcomingevents)

# Legislative

## Celebrating the ADA

June 26, 2014 — In honor of the 24th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Southeast ADA Center of the ADA National Network has released an ADA Anniversary Tool Kit. Since 1990, the ADA has been instrumental in providing equal access for individuals with disabilities in employment, transportation, communications, and public programs and services. The Tool Kit, meant for public use, provides information on the background of the ADA, current disability statistics, and other resources helpful for ADA implementation. In addition, the Southeast ADA Center is encouraging all individuals to continue celebrating the work of the ADA by looking forward to the 25th Anniversary and pledging to commit to another 25 years of accessibility.

#### Additional Information

[ADA Anniversary](http://adaanniversary.org/)

[<http://adaanniversary.org/>]

# Regulatory Activities

## FCC to Host Discussion on the Accessibility of Social Media

The FCC Accessibility and Innovation Initiative will be hosting a public event entitled “Accessing Social Media” on Thursday, July 17, 2014 at FCC Headquarters. The event will include a collaborative panel discussion on the accessibility of social media tools and content for people with disabilities, which will be followed by a technology demonstration. Confirmed speakers for the event include representatives from ABILITY Magazine, the American Association of People with Disabilities, the National Council on Disability, and the U.S. Department of Labor. Those interested in attending are encouraged to RSVP by sending an email with their name and organization affiliation to AccSocMedia@fcc.gov. For those unable to attend, the event will be broadcast live with open captioning at [www.fcc.gov/live](http://www.fcc.gov/live).

#### Additional Information

[FCC Event: Accessing Social Media](http://www.fcc.gov/events/accessing-social-media)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/events/accessing-social-media>]

## Closed Captioning Exemptions Denied

June 2, 2014 – The FCC issued a Public Notice denying petitions for exemption from closed captioning rules. Sixteen different entities were named in the Notice, 12 of which broadcast religious programming. Under the current process, programming providers, owners or producers are able to file a petition for exemption from closed captioning their content if they could show the process to be “economically burdensome.” Regarding the 16 entities cited, the FCC reviewed their initial requests but required further information before processing. The FCC stated that the petitioners “failed to provide in full the requested supplemental information.” Because of this, the FCC has dismissed these petitions for exemption. A full appendix listing the entities can be found by clicking the link below.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Notice to Dismiss Closed Captioning Exemption](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0602/DA-14-762A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0602/DA-14-762A1.pdf>]

## FCC Chairman Awards Accessibility Innovators

June 9, 2014 – FCC Commissioner, Tom Wheeler, presented the 3rd Annual Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman’s AAA) at the 2014 M-Enabling Summit in Arlington, Virginia. These are honorary awards given to innovators that develop communication technologies for people with disabilities. The Chairman’s AAA falls under the FCC’s Accessibility and Innovation Initiative and is awarded to both the private and public sector. The awards were chosen out of the following seven categories: Employment Opportunities, Closed Captions, Mobile Web Browsers, Advanced Communication Services (ACS), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Social Media and Video Description. Chairman Wheeler stated, ““The potential of broadband-enabled technology to improve the lives of Americans living with disabilities is almost limitless -- but only if that technology is accessible. I’m glad that these awards can help spark the development of new and creative technologies that furthers the important goal of making communications accessible for all Americans.” For a complete list of winner, please click the link below.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Chairman’s AAA](http://www.fcc.gov/document/chairman-wheeler-honors-innovators-accessibility)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/document/chairman-wheeler-honors-innovators-accessibility>]

## FCC Opens ASL Videophone Line

June 10, 2014 – For the first time, the FCC has launched a service they are calling the “ASL Consumer Support Line.” This video-based support line will engage deaf and hard of hearing consumers who communicate through American Sign Language (ASL). Prior to this, the deaf and hard of hearing community was only able to communicate via relay services or through a complaint form that could be filed online. Now, these consumers will be able to use their videophones and a ten-digit number to connect to ASL Consumer Specialists during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. Beyond being able to file formal complaints, this service will allow consumers to ask questions related to “telecommunications relay service (TRS), closed captioning and access to emergency information on television, and general telecommunication matters, such as slamming, Do-Not-Call telemarketing violations and broadband services.” To access this service, citizens who communicate via ASL can call 844-FCC-ASL (844-432-2275) or 202-810-0444 between 10AM and 5:30pm (EST) Monday through Friday.

#### Additional Information

[ASL Consumer Support Line](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0610/DOC-327495A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0610/DOC-327495A1.pdf>]

## FCC Evaluating Industry Compliance with Accessibility Requirements

June 17, 2014 - The Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) of the FCC issued a Public Notice [**CG Docket No. 10-213]** seeking comment on the accessibility of communications technology for the 2014 Biennial Report. The report will address accessibility barriers to new communications technologies, effects of accessibility recordkeeping and enforcement requirements, and procedural matters. Submitted information will assist the FCC in evaluating compliance with the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, requiring that telecommunication services and advanced communication equipment be accessible to people with disabilities. The FCC sought input on the accessibility of equipment used with non-mobile and mobile services, including: analog telephone handsets, digital telephone handsets, cordless phones used with landline and interconnected VoIP services, basic mobile phones, and smart phones. The 2014 Biennial Report will be presented to Congress in October.

#### Additional Information

[Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Seeks Comment on the Accessibility of Communications Technologies for the 2014 Biennial Report Required By the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=327679)

[https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs\_public/index.do?document=327679]

## FCC to Vote on Closed captioning of Online Video Clips

June 20, 2014 – FCC Chairman, Tom Wheeler announced a tentative agenda for July’s Open Meeting. Reports to be considered by the Commission include: Modernizing E-Rate to Deliver Digital Learning, Connect America Fund Rural Broadband Experiments, and Closed Captioning of Internet Protocol-Delivered Video Clips. Regarding the latter, the FCC has planned a vote to determine if online video clips will be included in closed captioning mandates. The meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 11, 2014 at 10:30a.m. EDT.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Announces July Open Meeting Agenda](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0620/DOC-327779A1.pdf) [<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0620/DOC-327779A1.pdf>]

## Media Bureau Issues Report on Video Description

June 30, 2014 — The FCC Media Bureau released a Report to Congress addressing the status, benefits and cost of video description. In accordance with Section 202 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, the current rules require certain television broadcast stations and MVPDs “to provide video description for a portion of the video programming they offer to consumers.” The report highlights that while much work has been done to ensure compliance with the rules, consumers note the need to expand video description even further. Specifically, select broadcast stations are required provide 50 hours of video description per calendar quarter, however “the actual amount of video-described programming [ranges] from the high 50s to 88 hours per quarter.” In addition, other networks, such as Turner Classic Movies and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), have also begun to offer video-described programming voluntarily. The report notes that while consumers acknowledge that they are pleased with this progress, they also observe that programming available with video description is lacking. Further noting that there is still a need to educate customer support on video-described programming and provide consumer information as to which programming contains video description. The report also highlights the need for video-description of IP-delivered video content, noting that while industry argues there are technical challenges, current technologies support a secondary audio stream for video description on IP-delivered video content.

#### Additional Information

[Report to Congress [MB Docket No. 11-43]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0630/DA-14-945A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db0630/DA-14-945A1.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

## Phoebe Ball Joins National Council on Disability

June 16, 2014 – The National Council on Disability (NCD) has announced the addition of Phoebe Ball as their Legislative Affairs Specialist. Previously a staff attorney with the non-profit group, Disability Rights Florida (DRF), Phoebe’s experience includes “access to home- and community-based services, self-determination, and guardianship,” along with other Medicaid focused work. Her personal experience with Spina Bifida as a parent will allow her to bring firsthand expertise to the concerns of parents with disabilities. Before her time in Florida, Phoebe worked at the University of Iowa in their Law, Health Policy and Disability Center. Her resume shows her dedication as an advocate for people with disabilities. Anne Sommers, Director of Legislative Affairs & Outreach with NCD, had this to say about Phoebe: “Phoebe’s personal and professional experiences make her well positioned to bridge the gap between policy concepts and how policy plays out in real lives -- a skill set we look forward to utilizing as the agency continues its important work with elected officials and their staff on Capitol Hill.”

#### Additional Information

[NCD adds Phoebe Ball](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/061620014)

[<http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/061620014>]

## Sprint Releases Cognitive Accessibility Apps

June 17, 2014 – Sprint Good WorksSM launched their Neurodiversity ID Pack, a mobile applications collection assisting consumers with neurodevelopmental disabilities and cognitive conditions, such as autism, dyspraxia, and dyslexia. As the third largest wireless networking corporation in the U.S., Sprint is demonstrating their commitment to wireless accessibility with this collection of apps, weblinks, educational tools, developmental games for children, and support apps for parents. Some apps include: Play and Learn Languages app, ACC Autism myVoiceCommunicator app, First-Then Visual Schedule app, and My Autism Help app for special-needs parents.

#### Additional Information

[Application Bundle for Those with Disabilities, Including Autism](http://newsroom.sprint.com/blogs/devices-apps-and-services/application-bundle-for-those-with-disabilities-including-autism.htm?question_box=neurodiversity&id16=neurodiversity)

[http://newsroom.sprint.com/article\_display.cfm?article\_id=11458]

## CEA Honored with National Access Award

June 26, 2014 — The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) has been selected to receive the 2014 National Access Award for their “continued advocacy for emerging technologies that help improve the lives of people with hearing loss.” The annual award is presented by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) to recognize organizations working to alleviate the effects of hearing loss through technology development, research and legislation. Through this award, HLAA recognizes CEA’s continual commitment to ensure accessibility within technology, specifically acknowledging the CEA Foundation, which works to provide seniors and people with disabilities to accessible technology. Of CEA’s commitment to accessibility, Executive Director of HLAA, Anna Gilmore Hall, stated, “The members of CEA are embracing technology that is accessible to people with disabilities. They are creative and innovative and are driving the market toward new products that will dramatically improve the lives of people with hearing loss and other disabilities. We are excited that they had the foresight to create the CEA Foundation, which is committed to improving the lives of seniors and people with disabilities.”

#### Additional Information

[CEA Press Release](http://www.ce.org/News/News-Releases/Press-Releases/2014/CEA-Earns-Hearing-Loss-Association-of-America%E2%80%99s-Na.aspx)

[<http://www.ce.org/News/News-Releases/Press-Releases/2014/CEA-Earns-Hearing-Loss-Association-of-America%E2%80%99s-Na.aspx>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

## 2014 “Getting Wireless” Student Design Challenge

June 23, 2014 — During the 2014 spring semester, 83 industrial design students at Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech participated in the Wireless RERC’s fifth annual “Getting Wireless” design challenge. In 2010, the Wireless RERC began offering industrial design students an opportunity to participate in a brief project to explore application of Principles of Universal Design to mobile wireless technologies. Faculty of the industrial design programs of Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) have embraced the challenge and incorporated this project in their spring curricula ever since. This year, 29 sophomores at Virginia Tech participated under the direction of Assistant Professor Akshay Sharma. At Georgia Tech, 19 juniors under instructor Wendell Wilson, and 35 sophomores under Assistant Professor Young Mi Choi and instructor John Lau participated in the project.

In each class, teams of 3-4 students were assigned one of four customer personas based on findings of the Wireless RERC’s user research projects. Each persona presented a real-life scenario which might be addressed through wearable wireless technology, including a mother of a child with autism, an individual with Lou Gehrig’s disease (ALS), an elderly man with low vision and limited mobility and an individual with progressive hearing loss. In the interest of universal design, each team was expected to consider the impact of their design strategies on the other personas and on wireless customers without disabilities.

The 2014 class impressed the Wireless RERC staff and industry professionals with thorough and insightful research regarding their personas, as well as awareness of emerging wearable technologies to meet their needs. Each team enthusiastically explored a broad range of creative concepts. Their polished final presentations conveyed confidence in applying universal design principles to real-life challenges. All of us who use wireless technologies, with and without disabilities, will benefit when these students pursue career opportunities in the wireless industry.

## Virginia Tech Team Solutions

[Virginia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - Inline](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/580)

[Virginia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - Zone](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/581)

[Virginia Tech "Carolyn" Team Solution - ConnecTive](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/585)

[Virginia Tech "Carolyn" Team Solution - Vitro](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/586)

[Virginia Tech "Morrie" Team Solution - Nuvu](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/589)

[Virginia Tech "Warren" Team Solution - Audience](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/591)

[Virginia Tech "Warren" Team Solution - UDI](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/592)

## Georgia Tech Team Solutions

[Georgia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - Motus and WriteTrack](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/576)

[Georgia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - ReMIND](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/577)

[Georgia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - Smart Watch for Autism](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/578)

[Georgia Tech "Andy" Team Solution - TAG and PROMPT](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/579)

[Georgia Tech "Carolyn" Team Solution - Trackware](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/582)

[Georgia Tech "Carolyn" Team Solution - Visualeyes](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/583)

[Georgia Tech "Carolyn" Team Solution - Wave](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/584)

[Georgia Tech "Morrie" Team Solution - GameFit](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/587)

[Georgia Tech "Morrie" Team Solution - PicVenture](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/588)

[Georgia Tech "Warren" Team Solution - Attune](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/590)

#### Additional Information

[Getting Wireless Challenge](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/575)

[http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/575]

# Upcoming Events

## The International Summit on Accessibility: Making it Happen: From Intention to Action

The International Summit on Accessibility will hold its 2014 summit July 12-15, 2014 at the Ottawa Convention Centre in Ottawa, Ontario. The Summit, hosted by Carleton University and the Province of Ontario, is centered around best practices, innovation and dialog/action focusing on accessibility and “inclusive communities.” This is an excellent opportunity to connect with influencers in the field of accessibility.

#### Additional Information

[International Summit on Accessibility 2014](http://carleton.ca/accessibilitysummit/)

[<http://carleton.ca/accessibilitysummit>]

## Effective Access Technology Conference 2014

The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) will hold its 2nd Annual Effective Access Technology Conference July 17-18, 2014 in Rochester, New York. The conference will focus on innovative solutions for barriers facing technology access for people with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Effective Access Technology Conference 2014](http://www.rit.edu/research/access/)

[<http://www.rit.edu/research/access/>]

## The Arc’s 2014 National Convention

The ARC’s 2014 National Convention will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana September 30th – October 2nd, 2014. The Convention aims to offer an environment for people to come together to “learn, improve and lead the movement for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) into the future.” Registration for the convention is currently open.

#### Additional Information

[The Arc’s 2014 National Convention](http://convention.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=3975)

[<http://convention.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=3975>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

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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, Braeden Benson [braeden@cacp.gatech.edu], Amelia Williams [Amelia@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu].

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