Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

September 2013

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# Overview

This month, The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a *Public Notice* [**EB Docket No. 04-296**] seeking comment on issues identified following the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Although the test was regarded as successful, the Bureau is seeking comment on technical and accessibility issues identified during the test.

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions released a report entitled, “High Expectations: Transforming the American Workforce as the ADA Generation Comes of Age.” The report noted that, while the ADA Generation has made strides within secondary education, there is still a general disparity in labor force participation among people with and without disabilities, except for those in the 16 to 19 year old age range.

The Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) released a report outlining the results from their ongoing study on workplace accommodations. The report highlights that workplace accommodations allowed employers to “retain valued and qualified employees” and many accommodations could be implemented at no cost, while the average cost for other accommodations is around $500.

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# Regulatory Activities

## FCC Speaker Highlights Accessible Technology

September 3, 2013 — On September 12, 2013 the FCC hosted Dr. Yevgen Borodin, a Research Assistant Professor from Stony Brook University, as the second speaker for the *Accessibility and Innovation Speaker Series*. Dr. Borodin’s presentation, entitled “Improving Accessibility for the General Public,” chronicled the “moving target” of accessibility and strategies that can be used to ensure technology is accessible for people with disabilities. The presentation was followed by an accessible technology demonstration. A recording of the event can be found [here](http://www.fcc.gov/events/accessibility-innovation-initiative-speaker-series-presents-yevgen-borodin-improving-accessib).

#### Additional Information

[FCC Accessibility and Innovation Speaker Series](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0904/DOC-323140A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0904/DOC-323140A1.pdf>]

## FCC Seeks Comment on 2011 Nationwide EAS Test

September 23, 2013 – The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (the Bureau) of FCC issued a *Public Notice* [**EB Docket No. 04-296**] seeking comment on issues identified following the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on November 9, 2011. The EAS Test allowed the FCC and FEMA to initiate an Emergency Action Notification (EAN), simulating an “actual Presidential activation of the EAS.” Although the test was regarded as successful, the Bureau identified and is asking for comments concerning problems which prevented EAS participants from either receiving or redistributing the alert. Specifically, the Bureau is seeking comment on whether header codes in an EAN alert need to specify a “time of release” or a location code, as Presidential alerts are meant to be both nationwide and in real-time. In addition, the nationwide test revealed that the visual text crawls accompanying the alert were often reported as unreadable due to either the speed of the crawl or the font. The Bureau is seeking input on how these issues should be addressed, how the FCC can work to ensure all crawls are accessible for people with disabilities, on the timing of the EAS test, and whether any specific technical factors need to be considered when determining the length of future EAS tests. Comments are due October 23, 2014 and Reply Comments are due November 7, 2013.

#### Additional Information

[Public Notice [EB Docket No. 04-296]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0923/DA-13-1969A1.pdf)

# [<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0923/DA-13-1969A1.pdf>]

# Publications and Reports

## Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact

September 1, 2013 — The Job Accommodations Network (JAN), a consulting service provided by the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), released a report outlining the results from their ongoing study on workplace accommodations implemented by employers who contacted JAN. The report highlighted that for most employers, workplace accommodations to “retain valued and qualified employees” could be implemented at no cost, while the average cost for other accommodations are around $500. Benefits seen from the accommodations included being able to retain the employee, increased productivity, improved interactions among co-workers and customers, and increased profitability. Employers also found that working with JAN was beneficial, with almost all respondents stating “they would use JAN services again for assistance with workplace accommodations.”

#### Additional Information

[Accommodation and Compliance Series Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact](http://askjan.org/media/LowCostHighImpact.html)

[<http://askjan.org/media/LowCostHighImpact.html>]

## G3ict Releases Preliminary Findings from ICT Report

September 23, 2013 – Disabled People International (DPI) and the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technology (G3ICT) have release preliminary findings from the upcoming third edition of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) *Progress Report* on the accessibility of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The report outlines the actions taken by 72 States Parties to implement the accessibility provisions of the CRPD that relate to ICT. Findings from the report highlight that while in 2013 50% of countries “have a definition of accessibility which includes ICTs or electronic media in their laws or regulations,” only 25% actually monitor accessibility standards for ICTs. In addition, only 31% of countries report that they have created programs to ensure procurement of accessible the ICT. Of the preliminary findings, DPI Chairperson Javed Abidi noted, “Depriving persons with disabilities from equal access to essential ICT-based applications and services violates the core dispositions of Article 9 of the CRPD and creates an unsustainable economic and social development gap in our digital age.” The full report will be released November 15, 2013 and will be available to download from G3ICT and DPI.

#### Additional Information

[G3ICT Press Release](http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_71#!)

[<http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_71#!>]

## Youth with Disabilities Key to Transforming the American Workforce

September 26, 2013 — U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, released a report entitled, “High Expectations: Transforming the American Workforce as the ADA Generation Comes of Age.” The report highlighted that the “ADA Generation,” described as youth with disabilities who have “come of age after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),” have benefited from the provisions of the ADA, leading to better education, transportation, and communications access. The report further noted that, while the ADA Generation has made strides within secondary education, there is still a general disparity in labor force participation among people with and without disabilities. The report identified “one bright spot”: there is a relatively small gap in the labor force participation rates of individuals with disabilities and their peers in the 16 to 19 year old age. Consequently, the report identifies four areas to help continue eliminating the labor market disparity for youth with disabilities:

* Increasing support for high school and middle school students with disabilities,
* Improving transitional services for students with disabilities entering postsecondary education and the workforce,
* “Changing the assumptions in disability benefit programs that discourage young people with disabilities from working,” and
* Working with employers to correct misconceptions about people with disabilities while “building strong pipelines from school to the competitive workforce.

#### Additional Information

[High Expectations: Transforming the American Workforce as the ADA Generation Comes of Age](http://www.harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/52446704c3501.pdf)

[<http://www.harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/52446704c3501.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

## Change My World in One Minute Contest

September 3, 2013 — In honor of World Cerebral Palsy Day, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) announced the Change My World in One Minute Contest. The contest gathers life-changing ideas which should take no longer than a minute to explain. The public will then vote on their favorite idea, and inventors from around the world will work to create the ideas with the most votes while competing for $50,000 in prizes. Ideas may be posted [here](http://ideas.worldcpday.org/) until October 31, 2013 and public voting on their favorite ideas begins October 1, 2013.

#### Additional Information

[Change My World in One Minute](http://ideas.worldcpday.org/)

[<http://ideas.worldcpday.org/>]

[World Cerebral Palsy Day Website](http://en.worldcpday.org/)

[<http://en.worldcpday.org/>]

## Sprint Releases New Accessible Smartphone

September 6, 2013 — Sprint announced the release of Kyocera Kona, a new smartphone with multiple accessibility features. The compact flip phone provides users with a tactile keyboard, verbal descriptions of on-screen menus, “high-contrast user interface options,” 911 shortcuts, and “verbal translation enabling internet browsing.” The phone is also being currently offered free of charge, following a $50 mail-in rebate. Of the service, David Owens, Vice President of Product Development at Sprint, stated, “Sprint has always been dedicated to ensuring accessibility – whether it’s our award winning accessibility Sprint ID application bundles or a device like Kona ... We are providing the product free of charge because we want anyone who has a unique need to be able to take advantage of this great new offering.”

#### Additional Information

[Sprint Launches Kyocera Kona](http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-launches-kyocera-kona-industry-first-feature-phone-with-verbal-translation-of-internet-browsing.htm)

[<http://newsroom.sprint.com/news-releases/sprint-launches-kyocera-kona-industry-first-feature-phone-with-verbal-translation-of-internet-browsing.htm>]

## American Foundation for the Blind Accepting Nominations for Migel Medals

September 12, 2013 —The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced that they are accepting nominations for the 2013 Migel Medals. The medals, considered the “highest honor in the blindness field,” were established in honor of M.C. Migel, the first chairperson of AFB, and are awarded to a professionals and volunteers whose work has “significantly improved the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired.” Nominations are due October 4, 2013 and can be submitted [here](http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=5&SectionID=106&Mode=Survey&SurveyID=116).

#### Additional Information

[AFB Call for Nominations](http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=5&SectionID=106&Mode=Survey&SurveyID=116)

[<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=5&SectionID=106&Mode=Survey&SurveyID=116>]

[Migel Medal Nomination Application](http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=5&SectionID=106&Mode=Survey&SurveyID=116)

[<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=5&SectionID=106&Mode=Survey&SurveyID=116>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

## Wireless RERC Researchers Present at CDC Grand Rounds

September 17, 2013 – Wireless RERC Researchers Brian Jones and Carrie Bruce presented at the CDC Grand Rounds, discussing the Grand Rounds’ September theme of “Technology and Health: Aging Safely and More Independently.” Brian’s discussion, entitled “Researching Technologies for Healthy Aging,” focused on technologies available for assisting older adults in living independently, while Carrie spoke on the applications of universal design in comparison with assistive devices in her discussion entitled “Supportive Design Strategies to Facilitate Function, Independence, and Safety.”

#### Additional Information

[CDC Grand Rounds](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/grandrounds/)

[<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/grandrounds/>]

# Upcoming Events

## STEM Career Showcase for Students with Disabilities

In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences will host the STEM Career Showcase for Students with Disabilities on October 16, 2013 in Raleigh, North Carolina. The conference is intended to help foster an interest in STEM fields among students with disabilities in grades 3-12, by providing an opportunity for these students to connect with “role models that are pushing back the boundaries of knowledge, building new and innovative products and creating the technologies of the future.” The conference is free; however those interested in attending are required to pre-register. Additionally, students attending the conference require “one-to-one chaperones.”

#### Additional Information

[STEM Career Showcase for Students with Disabilities](http://naturalsciences.org/programs-events/events/stem-career-showcase)

[<http://naturalsciences.org/programs-events/events/stem-career-showcase>]

## 16th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference in November

The 16th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference, presented by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), will be held in Westminster, Colorado November 4 – 8, 2013. The conference will address accessibility, including “accessible media, universal design and assistive technology” for institutions of higher education and businesses.  Online registration for the conference can be accessed [here](http://accessinghigherground.org/registration2013.html).

#### Additional Information

[16th Annual Accessing Higher Ground Conference](http://accessinghigherground.org/index.html)

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

## 2013 Compendium Briefing and Research-to-Policy Roundtable

The release of the *2013 Compendium of Disability Statistics* and the T*hird Annual Research-to-Policy Roundtable* will take place on December 11, 2013 in Washington, D.C. The Compendium is a web-based tool used to pool disability statistics. The release of the Compendium will be followed by a one-hour workshop on the sources and uses of disability statistics and the *Research-to-Policy Roundtable*, where researchers and disability advocates will be able to discuss ways that research can influence policy and programs affecting people with disabilities. Registration for the event will open this month.

#### Additional Information

[Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics and Research-to-Policy Roundtable](http://www.researchondisability.org/news-features/2013/08/15/date-released-for-2013-compendium-of-disability-statistics!)

[<http://www.researchondisability.org/news-features/2013/08/15/date-released-for-2013-compendium-of-disability-statistics!>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

September 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], Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu], or James White, Ph.D., [james@cacp.gatech.edu].

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