Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

June 2016

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# Overview

In June, The Federal Communications Commission announced the six winners and three honorable mentions of their Fifth Annual Awards for Advancement in Accessibility, also known as, the Chairman’s AAA. The awards are meant to recognize and honor innovative achievements in communications technology benefiting people with disabilities. This year, the awards were presented at the M-Enabling Summit at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Among the winners were an emergency support app for people with cognitive disabilities, a gesture control technology for smartphones, a wearable sign language recognition system, and a wearable system to help people with low vision. For people with vision loss, specifically for those that are deaf-blind, the FCC 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.

In Wireless RERC news, we submitted comments to the FCC’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) In the Matter of Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission’s Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System **[15-94];** Wireless Emergency Alerts **[PS Docket No. 15-91].** The recommendations made are intended to facilitate the maturation and modernization of both systems, empowering all to make informed choices that result in maximizing message diffusion and ensuring the same timely and effective access to alerts and warnings for people with disabilities. We also submitted comments to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) inquiry: “Notice, Request for Public Comment, The Benefits, Challenges, and Potential Roles for the Government in Fostering the Advancement of the Internet of Things [IoT] [**Docket No. 160331306–6306–01**]. Our comments addressed, among other things, IoT’s potential to advance the social inclusion and independent living of people with disabilities; and improve the dissemination of emergency information.

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# Regulatory Activities

**FCC Seeking Members for the Consumer Advisory Committee**

June 14, 2016 – The FCC released Public Notice [DA 16-657] seeking applications for membership to their Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC charter is expected to receive a renewal, and once renewed, service would begin on October 22, 2016. The CAC’s mission is to “…to make recommendations to the Commission regarding consumer issues within the jurisdiction of the Commission and to facilitate the participation of consumers in proceedings before the Commission.” The CAC will be comprised of members with diverse perspectives and expertise. Specifically, the FCC is seeking representatives from the following categories:

* Consumer organization (including underserved populations such as people with disabilities, older adults, rural residents, Native Americans, and people for whom English is a second language).
* State and local governments.
* Federal agencies.
* Communication service providers.
* Other qualified stakeholders.

The application deadline is midnight on Monday, July 25, 2016. Applications should be submitted via an online application form at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/cac/CAC_Application.html> (preferred) or mailed to the Federal Communications Commission, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Attn.: Scott Marshall, 445 12th Street S.W., Room 3-A633, Washington, DC 20554.

#### Additional Information:

[Public Notice](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0614/DA-16-657A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0614/DA-16-657A1.pdf>]

**Winners of the Chairman’s Awards for Advancement in Accessibility**

June 13, 2016 - The Fifth Annual Awards for Advancement in Accessibility, also known as, the Chairman’s AAA, are awards given to recognize and honor innovative achievements in communications technology benefiting people with disabilities. The winners are chosen by the FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler. The six winners and three honorable mentions were presented at the M-Enabling Summit at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

Winners of 2016 Chairman’s AAA

* SOS QR- Emergency Support App for People with Cognitive Disabilities
* UnusTactus- App Simplifies Smartphones for People with Cognitive Disabilities
* Wearable Sign Language Recognition System Prototype Interprets Motions and Displays Text
* Disney’s Movies Anywhere App- Syncs Audio Description with Film Action
* Sesame Enable- Users Can Engage Smartphone Controls with Head Gestures
* ESight Eyewear- Headset with Videocam to Help People with Low Vision

Honorable Mentions

* Convo Announce- Allows Video and Text through PA System Announcements
* KNFB Reader- App Reads Documents Using Smartphone Camera
* Holy Braille Project- Researches Solutions for Low-Cost Braille Display Tablets

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[CHAIRMAN WHEELER HONORS INNOVATORS IN ACCESSIBILITY COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0613/DOC-339781A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0613/DOC-339781A1.pdf>]

**FCC Extends Funding for Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program**

June 6, 2016 - The Federal Communications Commission released a final rule *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. This final rule became effective July 1, 2016. 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.

#### Additional Information

[NDBEDP Final Rule](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-06-06/pdf/2016-13221.pdf)

[<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-06-06/pdf/2016-13221.pdf>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Wireless RERC on the Record: Advancing Access to Emergency Alerting**

June 8, 2016 - Georgia Tech’s Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP), in collaboration with the Wireless RERC, submitted comments to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) In the Matter of Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission’s Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System **[15-94];** Wireless Emergency Alerts **[PS Docket No. 15-91].** The proposed changes in the NPRM are intended to strengthen the emergency alerting systems and to increase their effectiveness at prompting the public to take the appropriate protective actions. The major areas of change included improving alerting organization at the state level, bringing alerting tools up to date with advancements in technology, and developing community-based accessible public safety exercises. Wireless RERC comments contended that all communications received on digital devices should be accessible and concur that the proposed advancements for both WEA and EAS are a promising avenue for ensuring timely response and recognition of messages to safeguard all citizens. The recommendations made are intended to facilitate the maturation and modernization of both systems, empowering all to make informed choices that result in maximizing message diffusion and ensuring the same timely and effective access to alerts and warnings for people with disabilities.

Following are a sample of recommendations included in the comments:

* To ensure that all members of the population understand the messages, emergency managers and those writing the plans should also be very specific in their instructions concerning emergency actions to be taken, eliminating jargon and abbreviations. Further, protective action instructions should be part of any State EAS Plan template, and that said template contains information ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are included.
* Crowdsourcing is proving to be a valuable tool for emergency managers in gathering and dispersing information. Nonetheless, the challenge of authenticating and verifying submitted information is a growing one, and currently only solved by the manual moderation of incoming reports. Continued review of agencies that utilize crowdsourcing technologies and social media during disaster response is recommended.
* To ensure the accessibility of actual and test messages, EAS accessibility rules should apply across the board. The live code test presents an opportunity to gather data and feedback from the populace on the extent to which the accessibility requirements improve readability and comprehension of the message.
* User data regarding the most frequent methods by which people receive emergency alerts supports the addition of State/Local WEA Testing in state-level preparedness procedures.
* Comments supported the use of EAS and WEA public service announcements (PSAs). It was recommended that the PSAs present the information about the systems in several formats including audio, text, American Sign Language (ASL), and other languages with high usage in a particular area, and the symbol set provided by the IPAWS Symbology Plan approved by DHS and the National Alliance for Public Safety GIS Foundation.
* Comments supported extending WEA rules to include tablets and other mobile devices, including wearable and other nontraditional communications devices. Given that wearable technology is a growing market and both people with and without disabilities have adopted its use, wearable technology should be integrated into the WEA/IPAWS environment.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC Comments](https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60002098871.pdf)

[<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60002098871.pdf>]

**Wireless RERC on the Record: Role of Government in Advancement of the IoT**

June 1, 2016 - The Wireless RERC, in collaboration with Georgia Tech’s Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP), and the Center for the Development and Application of Internet of Things Technologies (CDAIT), Georgia Tech Research Institute, filed comments in response to The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) inquiry: “Notice, Request for Public Comment, The Benefits, Challenges, and Potential Roles for the Government in Fostering the Advancement of the Internet of Things [Docket No. 160331306–6306–01]. NTIA sought broad input from all interested stakeholders—including the private industry, researchers, academia, and civil society on the potential benefits and challenges of the Internet of Things (IoT) and what role, if any, the U.S. Government should play in this area.  The comments submitted address, among other things, IoT’s potential to advance the social inclusion and independent living of people with disabilities; and improve the dissemination of emergency information. The submission encouraged (a) the consultation of people with disabilities throughout the design and development phases of the IoT, and (b) the accessibility implications of future technologies become a high‐level consideration when planning Federal level technology development strategies and policy.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC Comments](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-record-role-government-advancement-iot)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-record-role-government-advancement-iot>]

**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:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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

**New Insights into the Emerging Internet of Things**

June 15, 2016 - NTIA released a blog post, *New Insights into the Emerging Internet of Things [IoT]*, which includes usage stats for people with disabilities. In July 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau collected data via the Computer and Internet Use Supplement of the Current Population Survey. They found that 6% of people with disabilities use wearable technologies, comparted to 12% of “All Americans.” Ninety-three percent of wearable device users live in urban environments, 52% are college graduates, and 40% earn incomes greater than $100k. These descriptive statistics are important to understanding people with disabilities’ entry into the Internet of Things environment, as the survey data showed a correlation between smart appliances and wearable technologies. Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they used their wearables to control smart home devices; 16 percentage points higher than the second highest method, TV-connected device (11%). Taken together, with the lower rate of usage of wearables among respondents with disabilities, the data infer that one way to ensure people with disabilities have access to IoT is to ensure the utility of, and access to wearable technologies.

#### Additional Information:

[*New Insights into the Emerging Internet of Things*](https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2016/new-insights-emerging-internet-things)

[<https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2016/new-insights-emerging-internet-things>]

# Other Items of Interest

**Website Access and Enforcement**

June 29, 2016 - The U.S. Department of Education’s [Office for Civil Rights](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html) (OCR) has settled with 11 school districts, schools and Departments of Education to ensure website accessibility for people with disabilities. The voluntary agreements cover issues raised under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/ocr/disabilityoverview.html) and [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](https://www.ada.gov/) to online services and programs. The organizations committed to the following remedial actions [verbatim as per OCR]:

* Affirming their commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities have opportunities equal to those of others to enjoy the recipients’ programs, services, and activities, including those delivered online;
* Selecting an auditor who has the requisite knowledge and experience to audit content and functionality and identify barriers to access on the existing website for people with disabilities;
* Conducting a thorough audit of existing online content and functionality;
* Adopting policies and procedures to ensure that all new, newly added or modified online content and functionality will be accessible to people with disabilities;
* Making all new website content and functionality accessible to people with disabilities;
* Developing a corrective action plan to prioritize the removal of online barriers;
* Posting a notice to persons with disabilities about how to request access to online information or functionality that is currently inaccessible; and
* Providing website accessibility training to all appropriate personnel.

#### Additional Information

[Press Release](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/settlements-reached-seven-states-one-territory-ensure-website-accessibility-people-disabilities)

[<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/settlements-reached-seven-states-one-territory-ensure-website-accessibility-people-disabilities>]

**E\*Trade Accessibility Initiative**

June 21, 2016 – The E\*Trade accessibility initiative aims to increase the accessibility of their services for customers with disabilities. According to the press release they will improve access to their website, mobile and desktop trading platforms, and mobile app. As part of the initiative E\*Trade has adopted the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, level AA to guide their advancements. Pratick Patel, and E\*Trade Customer stated, "Having full access to financial investing tools is important for everyone…I'm happy that E\*TRADE will make its web and mobile platforms more accessible, particularly for people who are blind or partially sighted, when it comes to all aspects of trading and investing."

#### Additional Information

[Press Release](https://about.etrade.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=976634)

[<https://about.etrade.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=976634>]

**New York Being Sued Over Online Voter Registration**

June 9, 2016- Due to the alleged inaccessibility of online voter registration, the National Federation of the Blind, the Center for the Independence of the Disabled, and individual plaintiffs who are blind are suing the New York State Board of Elections and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). They allege that New York is failing to meet accessibility and confidentiality standards. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorney Susan Mizner said, “Online voter registration is key to ensuring access to the ballot for people with disabilities. Yet in New York, it's not just difficult for hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities to register online, it's virtually impossible. We’ve told the state where the worst barriers are. It can easily fix the problems, but has refused to do so.” The barriers in New York’s online voter registration webpage include DMV webpages and downloadable forms that do not work with screen-reader software used by people that are blind and low-vision to hear and navigate computer screen content. They seek immediate adjustments to ensure the accessibility of the New York voter registration website.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[National Federation of the Blind and Others Sue New York over Inaccessible Online Voter Registration for People with Disabilities](https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-and-others-sue-new-york-over-inaccessible-online-voter-registration-people)

[<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-and-others-sue-new-york-over-inaccessible-online-voter-registration-people>]

**Now Accepting nominations for the 2016 henry viscardi achievement awards**

June 8, 2015 - The Henry Viscardi Achievement Award is an international award, first given in 2013, to leaders who help to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities in all areas of the community. They recognize excellent leaders based on their contributions to society. This award also remembers the founder of The Viscardi Center, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., a lead advocate for persons with disabilities and a disability advisor to eight U.S. presidents. Robert Dole, a former U.S, Senator, and Sherwood D. Goldberg, Esq. (Col. Ret) Senior Advisor for Asian Affairs for Naval Analysis are co-chairing this year’s Awards Selection Committee.

You can submit nominations online by September 30, 2016 by 5pm (EST).

Nominate here: <http://support.viscardicenter.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=1605>

#### Additional Information:

[Nominations Now Being Accepted for 2016 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards](http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2016/06/08/nominations-now-being-accepted-for-2016-henry-viscardi-achievement-awards/)

[<http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2016/06/08/nominations-now-being-accepted-for-2016-henry-viscardi-achievement-awards/>]

# Upcoming Events

**2016 Annual Conference on Independent Living**

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) will convene its annual conference from July 25 to 28, 2016, at the Grand Hyatt, in Washington, DC. The conference theme is “Solidarity – Everybody In.” NCIL Executive Director, Kelly Buckland invites attendees to “…unite to defeat the discrimination in policies and attitudes that led to the institutional bias, employment discrimination, and a lack of accessible housing and transportation – just to name a few of the barriers facing our community today.

#### Additional Information:

[Conference Website](http://www.ncil.org/2016-annual-conference-on-independent-living/)

[<http://www.ncil.org/2016-annual-conference-on-independent-living/>]

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

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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 Jamaya Powell [jamaya@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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