

## TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 8.06

June 2008

### Overview

Issues surrounding accessibility were topical in the House this month with the introduction of proposed legislation entitled **Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2008 [H.R. 6320]** and the passing of the **New and Emerging Technologies 911 Improvement Act of 2008 [H.R. 3403]** that includes a directive to improve access to 911 and enhanced 911 (E911) services for people with disabilities. The House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, held a hearing on Federal government progress in modernizing the Emergency Alert System where Derek K. Poarch, Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau at the FCC, announced a pending Order specifically addressing disability access to emergency information by way of the Commercial Mobile Alert System. The House Education and Labor Committee and the House Judiciary Committee both marked-up the **ADA Amendments Act [H.R. 3195]** (formerly the ADA Restoration Act) and adopted proposed deal language negotiated by the disability community and the business community as the new text of the legislation which was subsequently passed in the House the following week. The House Subcommittee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing: *Does Federal Statistical Data Adequately Serve People with Disabilities?* Witness testimony offered a plethora of recommendations for reforming federal disability data collection mechanisms.

In the regulatory arena the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a **Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)** titled **Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities [28 CFR Part 36]**. Proposed rules take into account advancements in technology that offer improved accommodations, especially regarding auxiliary aids and services, closed captioning and video description. Video description was also the topic of an FCC Consumer Advisory which informs consumers who are blind or have low vision of the actions they should take to ensure the continued provision of video description after the digital television transition. Further work was done to ensure access to E911 for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired with the FCC's Order to adopt 10-digit numbers for users of Internet based forms of telecommunications relay services. Providers will be required to maintain a physical address associated with the number to facilitate routing 911 calls to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP). The FCC released the working draft of their strategic plan for fiscal years 2009-2014 for public comment. Finally, in an effort to promote deployment of affordable broadband service, the FCC issued a **Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) seeking comment on service rules for advanced wireless spectrum in the 2155-2175 MHz band (AWS-3) [WT Docket No. 07-195]**.

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

### ***This Month's "Hot Topic"***

### ***Legislative Activities******Regulatory Activities***

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### ***Wireless RERC Updates***

### **Upcoming Events**

### **This Month's "Hot Topic"**

*In order to stimulate discussion on a variety of policy-related topics pertinent to wireless technology and accessibility issues for people with disabilities, each month we will present a new issue, question or commentary relating to wireless technology and/or disability. We would like you, our readers, to share your opinions on each month's Hot Topic by emailing the TDPH Editor, Salimah Major at [Salimah.major@cacp.gatech.edu]. Select comments will be published in the subsequent editions of TDPH. Consider the question below and let us hear from you!*

### **Question:**

Competition and market forces in large part have driven telecommunications innovation. Does industry response to consumer demands preclude a need for government mandates?

### **Legislative Activities**

#### **Accessibility Proviso Included in Enhanced 9-1-1 Act**

06.16.2008 – The **New and Emerging Technologies 911 Improvement Act of 2008 [H.R. 3403]** was passed by both the House and Senate and on June 23, 2008 was cleared to be sent to the White House. The purpose of the Act is to improve public safety through the deployment of Internet Protocol (IP) enabled 911 and enhanced 911 (E911) services, to promote a national transition to an IP-enabled emergency network and to upgrade access to 911 and E911 by people with disabilities. IP-enabled voice service providers must provide E911 service to its subscribers. Violations are enforced by the FCC under the jurisdiction of the Communications Act of 1934. Provisions in H.R. 3403 amend the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999, the Communications Act of 1934 and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Organization Act. In the latter amendment, NTIA is required to develop a national migration plan to an "IP-enabled emergency network capable of responding to all citizen-activated emergency communications and improving information sharing among all emergency response entities." The plan must identify solutions for the provision of 911 and E911 to people with disabilities and an implementation plan for the solutions. The migration plan must also include benefits of migration, mechanisms for ensuring national availability across all communities, identify location technology for

itinerant devices, analyze public safety answering point (PSAP) best and worst practices in their deployment of IP-enabled emergency networks, recommend legislative language and/or changes that would unencumber entities involved in their efforts to migrate, and analyze efforts and provide legislative language that would facilitate the provision of automatic location for E911 services. NTIA's plan must be developed nine months following enactment of the legislation in consultation with the disability community, public safety community, providers of technology, telecommunications relay services, telecommunications, and IP-enabled voice services. H.R. 3403 also requires the FCC to develop technology neutral standards for the implementation of E911 such as PSAP certification and testing requirements and validation procedures for location information.

[Source: Library of Congress]

**Additional Information:**

H.R. 3403

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.3403:>]

**House Committees Accept Proposed Deal Language for ADA Restoration Act**

06.18.2008 – The House Education and Labor Committee and the House Judiciary Committee marked-up [H.R. 3195], effectively changing its name from the ADA Restoration Act to the **ADA Amendments Act** by their near unanimous vote to accept the proposed deal language negotiated by the disability community and business community in Spring 2008. On June 24, 2008, Houses Rules Committee's [H.Res. 1299] officially adopted the amendment as recommended by the House Committee on Education and Labor. The deal language now replaces the original draft of the Act and is closed to further amendment. Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-WI), sponsor of H.R. 3195 believes the Bill, if and when it is passed, will restore the civil rights protections of people with disabilities. In Section 2(b) the purpose of the H.R. 3195 is to re-establish a "broad scope of protection to be available under the ADA" and to discard Supreme Court decisions that 1) stripped the ADA protections of people with disabilities that utilize mitigating measures such as assistive devices and medication to manage their disability; 2) redefine the "substantially limits" clause of determining level of disability. Subsequently, on June 25, 2008 the House passed H.R. 3195. Companion bill [S. 1881] was introduced in the Senate on July 27, 2007 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. There has been no further action on S. 1881 since a Fall 2007 hearing discussing the legislation. It still contains the original language of the ADA Restoration Act and would require harmonization with ADA Amendments Act.

[Source: Library of Congress]

**Additional Information:**

H.R. 3195

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.3195:>]

H. Res 1299

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.Res.1299:>]

S. 1881

[<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=s110-1881>]

Press Release: House Judiciary Committee Unanimously Passes Sensenbrenner/Hoyer Bill  
[<http://sensenbrenner.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=94576>]

### **Pending Order on Accessibility of Emergency Information**

06.04.2008 – The House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management held a hearing on the Federal government's initiatives and progress in modernizing the Emergency Alert System. Derek K. Poarch, Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau at the FCC, after reviewing the steps the FCC has taken to renovate the current EAS and implement the WARN Act through the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) rulemakings, announced at the hearing that the FCC is preparing an Order that will specifically address the accessibility of EAS alerts and emergency information by people with disabilities and by Americans who do not speak English. Though the FCC has previously released a CMAS Report and Order that adopted technical requirements that aim to ensure accessibility to CMAS alerts, it was concluded that delivery of alerts to non-English speakers was not technically feasible at this time. The pending Order will adopt rules that will augment the FCC's current rules requiring TV broadcaster licensees and cable providers to make emergency information accessible to people with disabilities.

[Sources: House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; International Association of Emergency Managers]

### **Additional Information:**

Written Statement of Derek K. Poarch

[<http://www.google.com/search?q=written+statement+of+Derek+K.+Poarch&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=com.frontmotion:en-US:official&client=firefox-a>]

Hearing Webcast: Assuring Public Alert Systems Work

[<http://transportation.edgeboss.net/wmedia/transportation/20080604ed.wvx>]

Committee in Transportation and Infrastructure's Summary of the Subject Matter

[[http://transportation.house.gov/Media/File/Economic%20Development/20080604/SSM\\_ED\\_6-4-08.pdf](http://transportation.house.gov/Media/File/Economic%20Development/20080604/SSM_ED_6-4-08.pdf)]

### **Proposed Legislation Advances Access Requirements for IP-Enabled Video & Communications**

06.19.2008 – The **Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2008 [H.R. 6320]** was introduced in the house and referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The proposed legislation seeks to ensure that IP-enabled communication and video programming is accessible by people with disabilities. H.R. 6320 outlines requirements for access to services and equipment, as well as administrative obligations for service providers and the FCC. Stipulations include:

- Hearing aid compatibility requirement for IP-enabled telecommunications equipment
- Manufacturers of IP-enabled technologies and software must design and develop products that are accessible
- IP-enabled communications service providers must ensure interoperability of real-time text communications in data formats between provider networks
- Video programming devices must have built-in decoder circuitry

- Emergency information and alerts must be accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired through the use of video description
- Broadens the FCC's closed captioning rules to include video-programming distributed over the Internet
- Closed captioning options must be easy to access via remote control
- Television menus for program selection and other uses must be accessible to people who are blind or have low vision
- Provides for universal service support for the distribution of equipment to individuals who are deaf-blind
- IP-enabled communications service providers must contribute to the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund
- Obliges the FCC to prescribe regulations to implement and enforce the provisions of the bill, including issuing an inquiry on closed captioning decoder and video description capabilities, user interfaces and video programming guides and menus

[Source: Library of Congress]

**Additional Information:**

H.R. 6320

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.6320:>]

**Recommendations to Improve Federal Disability Data**

06.04.2008 – The House Subcommittee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing: *Does Federal Statistical Data Adequately Serve People with Disabilities?* Testimony was heard by Steven Tingus, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Daniel Bertoni, Government Accountability Office; Anthony Coelho, Former Member of Congress, Pat Pound, National Council on Disability; Eddie Glen Bryant, Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; and Holly Hollingsworth, Washington University School of Medicine. The general consensus was that current measures of the state of Americans with disabilities needs significant reform in order for the data to effectively inform policymakers in setting their disability agendas/initiatives and measure the impact of current programs serving people with disabilities. Some recommendations include:

- Ensure that data covers all ages of the population such as children, working age adults and older Americans
- Utilize a social model of disability to assess quality of life, incorporating engagement in activity, degree of choice and satisfaction of the individual to determine facilitators and barriers to full participation in the community
- Promote a consistent, functional definition of disability to support comprehensive comparisons across data sources
- Promote a standard set of disability questions
- Require that the six disability questions included in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey be included in every federal survey that asks questions about race, sex, age, or ethnicity
- Assure adequate funding for research agencies to cultivate innovative collection activities

- Develop a full set of indicators vital to people with disabilities, utilizing indicators detailed in the NCD report: *Keeping Track: National Disability Status and Program Performance Indicators*

[Source: Subcommittee on Oversight and Government Reform]

#### **Additional Information:**

Hearing Testimony: *Does Federal Statistical Data Adequately Serve People Living with Disabilities?*

[<http://informationpolicy.oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=1984>]

### **Regulatory Activities**

#### **10-Digit Numbers for Internet Based Forms of TRS**

06.11.2008 – The FCC issued a news release announcing the adoption of traditional ten-digit numbers for users of Internet based forms of telecommunications relay services such as Video Relay Services (VRS) and Internet Protocol (IP) Relay. By assigning users of IP Relay and VRS with ten digit numbers, voice telephone users will be able to contact Internet based TRS users simply by picking up the phone, as opposed to needing an Internet connection. The new system will also ensure functionally equivalent access to emergency services by requiring IP based TRS providers to obtain and maintain the physical address of their users and route emergency calls to the appropriate PSAPs. The full text of the Order has yet to be published, but according to the news release it also contains a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to seek additional comment on matters related to the provision of TRS and the extension of other FCC rules to TRS providers.

[Source: FCC]

#### **Additional Information:**

FCC News Release

[[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-282888A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-282888A1.pdf)]

#### **Accessibility Standards Proposed by the Department of Justice**

06.17.2008 – The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) titled **Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities [28 CFR Part 36]**. The proposed rules would adopt Parts I and III of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act and the United States Access Board's Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines (2004 ADAAG). Section 63.303 addresses the provision of auxiliary aids and services in light of the technological advancements that have occurred in the seventeen years since the original language was published. Additional examples of auxiliary aids and services include video interpreting services (VIS), audio description services, telebrailers, reading machines, brailled displays, signage or mapping, screen reader software, magnification software, optical readers, secondary audio programs (SAP), and accessible electronic information technology. Public accommodations are encouraged to consult with the person requiring an auxiliary aid or service as to what would best ensure effective communication for that individual. Further, the rule would apply to people with disabilities, as well as their companions and strictly prohibits public accommodations from requiring the individual with a disability to

furnish their own interpreter. The DOJ is seeking comment on outlining performance standards for VIS to ensure effective communication that includes both the quality of the technology and the training of staff to operate VIS. The NPRM is also seeking comment on the provision of closed captioning in movie theaters and offers several technology options for consideration, including using wireless handheld devices to view captions from any seat in the theater. Closed captioning in sports stadiums is also open for comment, especially with regard to safety and emergency information. All comments must be received by August 18, 2008.

[Source: Federal Register]

#### **Additional Information:**

NPRM: [Non Discrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities](http://frwebgate5.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=573836146490+23+0+0&WAIAction=retrieve)  
[<http://frwebgate5.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=573836146490+23+0+0&WAIAction=retrieve>]

Text of the ADA

[<http://www.access-board.gov/about/laws/ADA.htm#Text>]

2004 ADAAG

[<http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/index.htm>]

#### **FCC Consumer Advisory on Video Descriptions & the Digital Transition**

06.06.2008 – The FCC released a consumer advisory aimed at informing people who are blind or have low vision about the steps they should take to ensure the provision of video description services after the digital transition in February 2009. Video description is a supplemental audio track that provides verbal descriptions of visual elements such as environment or actions of characters. Although the DTV transition will make more audio channels available to broadcasters for the *voluntary* provision of video description, the FCC encourages consumers who benefit and/or rely on video descriptions to confirm with manufacturers and retailers that 1) the digital to analog converter boxes they purchase are capable of providing video descriptions; 2) if purchasing a digital television confirm that it includes the video description feature; 3) learn how the audio streams of digital TV are accessed and confirm that remote control and on-screen menus are accessible to people who are blind or have low vision. WGBH National Center for Accessible Media has identified two digital-to-analog converter boxes capable of passing thorough video descriptions. They are the Digital Stream DTX 9900 and Insignia NS-DXA1. Both boxes may be purchased with the government subsidized vouchers. Although individuals that subscribe to cable or satellite services will not require a converter box to continue receiving a television signal they are encouraged to contact their provider to determine availability of video description.

[Source: FCC]

#### **Additional Information:**

FCC Consumer Advisory: [Video Description and the Digital Television Transition](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/dtvvideodescription.html)  
[<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/dtvvideodescription.html>]

#### **FCC Invites Comment on its Strategic Plan**

06.24.2008 – The FCC released the working draft of their strategic plan for fiscal years 2009-2014. It includes six strategic goals and twenty-one corresponding performance goals. The strategic goals include broadband, competition, spectrum, media, public safety and homeland security and modernizing the FCC. Objective number one of the public safety and homeland security goal, “develop policies that promote access to effective communications services in emergency situations by public safety, health, defense and other emergency personnel, as well as all consumers in need” includes language on ensuring consumers with disabilities have access to emergency information. The Commission has invited the American public to comment on the Plan. Comments should focus specifically on:

1. The strategic direction proposed in the document as embodied in the general goals and objectives;
2. Providing additional contextual information not covered in the document's text; and
3. The means and strategies that the Commission should undertake to accomplish its goals.

Comments should be sent to [walter.boswell@fcc.gov](mailto:walter.boswell@fcc.gov) no later than July 24, 2008.

[Source: FCC]

#### **Additional Information:**

[FCC Strategic Plan 2009-2014](#)

[\[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-283196A1.pdf\]](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-283196A1.pdf)

[Word Version Available Here](#)

[\[http://www.fcc.gov/omd/strategicplan/\]](http://www.fcc.gov/omd/strategicplan/)

[Public Invited to Review Draft Commission Strategic Plan](#)

[\[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DA-08-1472A1.pdf\]](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-08-1472A1.pdf)

#### **Free Broadband! FCC Proposes Service Rules for Advanced Wireless Spectrum**

06.20.2008 – In an effort to promote deployment of affordable broadband service, the FCC issued a **Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) seeking comment on service rules for advanced wireless spectrum in the 2155-2175 MHz band (AWS-3) [WT Docket No. 07-195]**. The proposed rules would require the winner of the license and/or any subsequent lessees to utilize 25 percent of the network capacity to provide free, two-way broadband Internet service with data rates of at least 768 kbps downstream. Such free service must be made available anywhere the license offers other services that utilize the same spectrum. Additionally, the network must be open for users to use devices and/or applications of their choice on the network. The proposed rules for AWS-3 if adopted, have the potential to assist in narrowing the digital divide for communities formerly unable to afford broadband service or where service was not available. The open access requirement also provides consumers with greater choice and economic power in deciding what types of devices to purchase and connect to the network. Alternatively, the proposed plan has been criticized as an unviable business model. Comments are due fourteen days after the notice is published in the Federal Register.

[Source: FCC]

#### **Additional Information:**

[FNPRM: WT Docket no. 07-195](#)

[\[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/FCC-08-158A1.pdf\]](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-08-158A1.pdf)

## **Studies/Reports**

### **The Accessibility Imperative**

06.10.2008 – In Spring 2007 the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information Communications Technology (G3ict) brought together 175 representatives of persons with disabilities, information communications technology (ICT) vendors and users, government agencies and international development institutions to undertake extensive discussions regarding the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities as it relates to ICT accessibility directives for both public and private sectors. The outcome is the publication of *The Accessibility Imperative: Implications of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for Information Communications Technologies*. Chapters of the book are organized into four areas of inquest: best practices, applied ICT for people with disabilities, standardization, and legislative and regulatory resources. The book is essentially a consensus document that addresses the scope of future challenges, industry objectives and trends, government initiatives, and international cooperation. The book is now available as a free download in both text and DAISY (audio) format.

[Source: G3ict]

### **Additional Information:**

*The Accessibility Imperative: Implications of the Convention of the Rights of Person with Disabilities for Information Communications Technologies*

[[http://g3ict.com/resource\\_center/g3ict\\_book\\_-\\_the\\_accessibility\\_imperative](http://g3ict.com/resource_center/g3ict_book_-_the_accessibility_imperative)]

## **Other Items of Interest**

### **Closed Captioning on Handheld Devices**

06.03.2008 – WGBH's Media Access Group in collaboration with the IMS Company have answered the U.S. Department of Transportation's call to provide closed-captioning of in-flight media. Together, they developed the IMS' PAV-704 and PAV-705 platform for portable media players. The solution will provide captions of TV shows and movies for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing that can be displayed at the viewer's discretion. The media players will be available in October 2008.

[Source: AirFax.com]

### **Additional Information:**

News Release: [The IMS Company and WGBH's Media Access Group Enable Closed Captions on Handhelds](http://www.airfax.com/airfax/releases/showrelease.asp?id=2256)

[<http://www.airfax.com/airfax/releases/showrelease.asp?id=2256>]

### **Emerging Trends and People with Disabilities: Public Consultation**

06.16.2008 - The National Council on Disability (NCD) is seeking public input for a study of emerging issues and trends affecting the lives of people with disabilities as part of their effort to develop NCD's next annual progress report to the President and Congress. Disability issues such as health, housing, employment, insurance, transportation, assistive technology, recreation, emergency preparedness, training, prevention, early intervention and education are potential topics. Contributions will be used to develop legislative and

regulatory recommendations. NCD seeks input from individuals with disabilities, organizations representing a broad range of individuals with disabilities, and agencies interested in or serving individuals with disabilities. Comments are due to NCD by July 22, 2008. See below for additional information on where to send submissions.

[Source: NCD]

**Additional Information:**

NCD Press Release: [Emerging Trends and People with Disabilities: Public Consultation](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2008/public_consultation.html)  
[[http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2008/public\\_consultation.html](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2008/public_consultation.html)]

**WebAnywhere: Making Public Computers Accessible to the Blind**

06.25.2008 – New software, developed by Jeffrey Bigham, a doctoral student at the University of Washington, enables people who are blind or have low vision to access the Internet on computers in public accommodations such as libraries, museums, school computer labs and public kiosks or the private computers of friends that do not have screen reader software installed. WebAnywhere is a screen reader Internet service that processes the content on an external server and then transmits the audio file to play in the user's browser. No software is installed so it can be used on highly secured computers and networks like what one would find in a public library. When testing the service, users were asked to complete three tasks: check e-mail, look up a bus schedule and perform a search for a restaurant phone number. All tasks were accomplished successfully on a variety of machines and Internet connections. Future versions of the service will include a feature that allows the user to adjust the speed of the voice output and will incorporate other features found in screen readers currently on the market. The developer envisions a transition from access technology on the desktop to web-hosted tools available to anyone anywhere. To encourage development and proliferation of such tasks, WebAnywhere has been released as an open source project.

[Source: University of Washington]

**Additional Information:**

[WebAnywhere](http://webanywhere.cs.washington.edu/)  
[<http://webanywhere.cs.washington.edu/>]

**Wireless RERC Updates**

**WEC Files Comments Regarding Service Rules for Public Safety Spectrum**

06.19.2008 – The Wireless Emergency Communications (WEC) Project of the Wireless RERC filed comments in the FCC's **Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the service rules for the re-auction of the 700Mhz D-block spectrum [WT Docket No. 06-150 and PS Docket No. 06-229]**. The D-block was set aside to be a public-private partnership between public safety and the commercial winner of the license. However, the initial auction of the D-block failed to receive a bid that met the reserve price. The FCC sought comment on service rules that would encourage a successful bid for public-private partnership that is mutually beneficial to public safety and the commercial provider and/or recommendations

for achieving public safety goals without requiring a public-private partnership. WEC's comments endorse the deployment of the national interoperable wireless broadband network, with the availability of a full range of applications and services to users of the network for the delivery of emergency information that is accessible to the public, including persons with disabilities. Specific comments include encouraging the establishment of a Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Communications Systems (FICECS) to (a) develop a coordinated strategy for migrating the nation's public safety systems to a new broadband interoperable network, (b) develop strong, consistent guidance to states and localities to ensure all systems are migrating toward the same common interoperable national network, and (c) facilitate coordinated emergency response and citizen preparedness, especially for persons with disabilities; providing pre-established funding mechanisms to incentivize public safety migration to the new network; adopting technical network guidelines relying on existing global standards, and public comments filed in the proceeding prior to the commencement of an auction of the D-Block; ensure that the community of hearing aid users is not left unable to access these new devices developed for deployment in the 700 MHz spectrum; as well as other recommendations concerning the reserve price, network service fees, negotiation of the network sharing agreement, and initiating public safety priority access to the shared network.

**Additional Information:**

[Comments of the Wireless RERC](#)

[[http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native\\_or\\_pdf=pdf&id\\_document=6520030634](http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6520030634)]

[Text of the FNPRM Regarding the Re-auction of the D Block](#)

[[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/FCC-08-128A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-08-128A1.pdf)]

**Upcoming Events**

**10th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS 2008)**

The ASSETS series of conferences is aimed at providing a technical forum for presenting and disseminating research results that address the use of computing and information technologies to help persons with disabilities. ASSETS 2008 will be held in **Halifax, Canada on October 13-15, 2008**.

**Additional Information:**

[ASSETS 2008](#)

[<http://www.sigaccess.org/assets08/>]

**47<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention of the American Council of the Blind**

The theme of this year's ACB annual convention is "ACB in the Winner's Circle" and it will take place **July 4-**

**12, 2008 in Louisville, KY.** The convention covers a broad range of topics that affect the lives people with vision impairments and their families.

**Additional Information:**

[47<sup>th</sup> ACB Annual Convention](#)

[<http://www.acb.org/convention/prog2008.html>]

**2008 NAD Conference**

The National Association of the Deaf will hold its 49<sup>th</sup> Biennial NAD Conference on **July 7-11, 2008 in New Orleans, Louisiana**. Conference tracks include Business/Non-Profit, Community/Technology, Employment/Finances, Language/Culture and Leadership/Advocacy.

**Additional Information:**

[2008 NAD Conference](#)

[<http://www.nad.org/site/pp.asp?c=foINKQMBF&b=91587>]

**DTV Transition**

On February 17, 2008 all full-power broadcast television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting on analog airwaves and begin broadcasting only in digital.

**Additional Information:**

[What is DTV?](#)

[<http://www.dtv.gov/whatisdtv.html>]

[Converter Box Coupon Program](#)

[<https://www.dtv2009.gov/>]

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 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 writer/editor, Salimah Major, Information Analyst [[Salimah.major@cacp.gatech.edu](mailto:Salimah.major@cacp.gatech.edu)] or Paul M.A. Baker, Ph.D., AICP, CACP Director of Research [[paul.baker@cacp.gatech.edu](mailto:paul.baker@cacp.gatech.edu)].

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