



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC TAKES CRITICAL STEPS TO BRING ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES TO THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

Most Significant Accessibility Effort Since Americans with Disabilities Act

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today adopted a *Report and Order* that implements provisions of Section 104 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (“CVAA”). The CVAA was enacted to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the modern and innovative communications technologies of the 21st-century and represents the most significant accessibility legislation since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) in 1990.

These rules are necessary steps towards ensuring that the 54 million Americans with disabilities are able to fully use and benefit from advanced communications services. People with disabilities often have not shared in the benefits of rapid technological advancement. For example, only 41% of Americans with disabilities have broadband access at home, compared to the national average of 69%. In addition, today’s mobile phones have evolved into multi-function devices used for e-mail, text messages, and other advanced communications services. Statistics show that as of 2010, 40% of adults use the Internet, e-mail or instant messaging on a mobile phone, yet not all Americans with disabilities are able to share in these advanced technologies. Implementation of the CVAA is critical in addressing these inequities for both home and mobile broadband adoption.

Section 716 of the Act requires that providers of advanced communications services and manufacturers of equipment used for advanced communications services make their services and products accessible to people with disabilities, unless it is not achievable to do so. Where it is not achievable to do so, these covered entities must make their services and equipment compatible with commonly used assistive technologies. Section 717 requires new recordkeeping and enforcement procedures for these covered entities.

The actions the FCC took today are consistent with the Commission’s commitment to rapid deployment of and universal access to broadband services for all Americans. As described in the National Broadband Plan, broadband technology can spur economic growth and provide opportunity for all Americans. In keeping with Congress’s clear direction, the FCC has observed the balance that Congress struck in the Act, stimulating the development of accessibility solutions for people with disabilities and avoiding counterproductive burdens on product development.

The *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* seeks further comment on a number of issues for which the current record is insufficient.

By the Commission: Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners McDowell and Clyburn issuing separate statements; Commissioner Copps approving in part, dissenting in part and issuing a statement. FCC 11-151.

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