



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. Cir. 1974).

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FCC MOVES TO MAKE PERMANENT THE NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Commission Extends Successful Pilot Program, Sets Course for Making Permanent

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission voted today to make permanent its program that distributes communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind. Known as “iCanConnect,” the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program provides equipment needed to make telecommunications, advanced communications and the Internet accessible to Americans who have significant vision and hearing loss.

In a vote at the Open Commission Meeting, the Commission extended the current pilot program, which was set to expire on June 30, 2015. The Commission also voted to propose rules for a permanent extension of this successful program.

Through the program, deaf-blind consumers who meet income requirements can receive free communications equipment designed for people with combined vision and hearing loss. Installation, training and other technical support, including individual assessments of each consumer’s specific accessibility needs, are also available.

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, signed by President Obama in 2010, authorized the FCC to provide up to \$10 million annually from the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund to support such programs. The pilot program, launched in 2012, has helped thousands of Americans with combined hearing and vision loss to connect with family, friends, and community by providing life-changing communications access.

To build on the success of the current program, the FCC has proposed rules to ensure a seamless transition to a permanent program that is efficient and effective.

Communication is vital for day-to-day life, employment and community involvement. Without this program, low-income Americans who are deaf-blind would have a hard time affording the specialized equipment they need to engage in today’s world.

Action by the Commission May 21, 2015 by Order (FCC 15-57) and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 15-58). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly issuing statements.

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