



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 RELEASES FIRST-EVER PAPER ON ACCESSIBILITY AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission issued the agency’s first-ever working paper addressing accessibility and technology issues. Part of a series of working papers released in conjunction with the National Broadband Plan, the paper considers the numerous barriers to broadband usage faced by people with disabilities, including inaccessible hardware, software, services, and web content and expensive specialized assistive technologies.

“Only 42 percent of people with disabilities have high-speed Internet services at home -- and an astounding 39 percent of all non-adopters have a disability,” said Joel Gurin, Chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. “This is not acceptable, and we are implementing an ambitious accessibility agenda to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind.”

The paper recognizes the importance of removing barriers to accessibility by promoting industry innovation and building upon ongoing public and private sector collaborative efforts. At the same time, the paper identifies gaps that must be addressed to accelerate the adoption rate by people with disabilities, including:

- Improve implementation and enforcement of existing accessibility laws;
- Gather and analyze more information about disability-specific broadband adoption issues;
- Coordinate accessibility policy and spending priorities;
- Update accessibility regulations;
- Update subsidy programs and ensure the availability of training and support; and
- Update government approach to accessibility problem solving.

The paper builds upon the three broad recommendations from the National Broadband Plan: (1) the creation of a Broadband Accessibility Working Group (“BAWG”) within the Executive Branch; (2) the establishment of an Accessibility and Innovation Forum at the FCC; and (3) the modernization of accessibility laws, rules, and related subsidy programs by the FCC, the Department of Justice (“DOJ”), and Congress.

Gurin said, “We will be using a range of tools to address accessibility barriers. We will be initiating several rulemaking proceedings over the next few months and will also be launching

the Accessibility and Innovation Forum in July, which will promote collaborative problem solving through on-line mechanisms and ongoing workshops.”

The working paper, written by Elizabeth Lyle, a Policy Advisor to the Omnibus Broadband Initiative, can be found at <http://download.broadband.gov/plan/fcc-omnibus-broadband-initiative-%28obi%29-working-report-giant-leap-big-deal-delivering-promise-of-equal-access-to-broadband-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf> .