



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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**STATEMENT BY FCC COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN
ON THE ENACTMENT OF THE EQUAL ACCESS TO 21ST CENTURY
COMMUNICATIONS ACT**

Today, I was very pleased to witness President Obama sign The Equal Access to 21st Century Communications Act. This law will substantially advance an important principle that Congress wove into the fabric of communications policy years ago: That individuals living with disabilities should be able to use the same communications services that are available to all other Americans. This legislation is a strong step toward that reality.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act served to provide people with disabilities access to voice telephony services, but our rapid technological advances demand regulatory adaptation. Today, due to tremendous innovation and investment, Americans are seeking much more than just voice service from their mobile handsets. As this Act recognizes, consumers now expect access to video programming on their mobile phones, net books and other portable devices, and access to VoIP telephone service on their computers. This Act will give the Commission greater statutory authority to adopt rules that will offer people living with disabilities greater access to video programming, and the most advanced voice and data services on the market, irrespective of the communications platform being used to deliver those services. It also gives the Commission authority to reinstate its video description rules and to take measures to ensure people with disabilities have the information they need during times of emergency.

I was also pleased to see that the Act directs the Commission to provide relay service support for the distribution of customer premises equipment to make telecommunications and related services accessible by individuals who are deaf and blind. This is truly landmark legislation on behalf of the deaf and blind community with regard to access to communications services.

I understand that broad consensus among groups representing people living with disabilities and members of our communications industry played a critical role to having Congress consider and pass this legislation as quickly as it did. I commend this effort. This is a terrific example of how industry consensus and collaboration can play such a vital role in speeding much needed services to all Americans.