

PREPARED REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN GENACHOWSKI
Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility
Federal Communications Commission
December 18, 2012

Good afternoon.

Thank you all for being here for the presentation of our second Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility.

Internally, we call these the "Triple A awards."

And, no, presenting your award will not get you 10% off hotels and rental cars – although our public-private partnership team is working on that.

Thank you to Karen Peltz Strauss, Susan McLean, Kelly Jones, Jamal Mazrui, and our entire terrific team in the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Disability Rights Office for making today happen.

Harnessing the power of technology to benefit all Americans is at the core of the FCC's mission.

The potential of communications technology to improve the lives of Americans with disabilities is especially promising.

We established the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility in 2010 as a part of our National Broadband Plan, the first comprehensive nationwide strategy in the U.S. to unleash the opportunities of broadband.

The Plan includes our Accessibility and Innovation Initiative, which seeks to foster affordable accessibility solutions for the disabled through workshops, online tools, and awards like these today.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished, over the past three-plus years, to extend the benefits of broadband technology to Americans with disabilities.

With access to broadband technology, an individual with disabilities can telecommute or run a business out of her home; participate in online commerce; engage in civic dialogue; receive remote health and job-related support; or gain access to online educational classes and digital books.

As Karen mentioned, we've done a great deal to implement the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, the most significant disabilities law since the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As part of our implementation efforts of this new law, we've already taken steps to ensure that 21st century Internet-based and digital communications technologies are accessible to people with disabilities – to provide video description on television, to make sure that previously televised video programming shown over the Internet has captions, and to distribute accessible communications equipment to people who are deaf-blind.

In the coming year, we will be looking at ways to make sure that emergency programming shown on television is accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired, and to ensure that video equipment can pass through such accessible emergency information, as well as video description.

Today, we celebrate innovators who have helped make communications technology more accessible to people with disabilities.

We were very pleased with the excellent quality of the nominations we received, and I want to commend and applaud the efforts of all of the nominees.

The outstanding work submitted by so many companies, associations and individuals is truly inspiring.

I'd now like to first recognize the two honorable mentions. As I read your company's or organization's name, please come forward.

In the Consumer Empowerment Information category, we recognize Google Plus Hangouts.

This program allows people who are deaf and hard of hearing and who communicate in sign language to participate in multi-user video chat while controlling whose screen they want to view.

Adrienne Biddings is here today from Google to accept this award. Congratulations.

In the Mobile Applications category, we recognize the Virtual Braille Keyboard, developed by a team at Stanford University that was unable to join us today.

This innovation allows people who are blind or visually impaired to use the Braille code for input on the touchscreen of a tablet or other mobile device, allowing greater access to the world of apps for such individuals.

Congratulations to both honorable mentions.

I'd now like to recognize the winners of the 2012 Awards for Advancement in Accessibility.

As I call your company's name, please come forward for a quick photo.

In the category of Civic Participations Solutions, the winner is: Prime III: A Universally Designed Voting Machine.

This system allows people with visual, hearing, reading, or dexterity disabilities to privately and independently vote using the same voting machine as everyone else.

Andrea Johnson from the Clemson University Human-Centered Computing Lab is here to accept this award. Congratulations.

In the category of Consumer Empowerment Information, the winner is Project StAR: Accessible Radio 2012 a.k.a The Narrator.

The Insignia Narrator, an AM/FM/HD radio built by Best Buy's exclusive brand Insignia, follows the principle of universal design by providing simple, tactile controls that talk so that people who are blind or visually impaired can control the user interfaces on their radio.

The Narrator was designed in collaboration with the International Association of Audio Information Services (formerly the Association of Radio Reading Services) Project StAR (Standards for Accessible Radios).

IAAIS members provide access to print-based information for individuals who are print-disabled.

Neely Oplinger of Metropolitan Washington Ear, Mike Dahnert of Best Buy and Al Shuldiner of Ibiqity are all here to accept this award on behalf of Project StAR. Congratulations.

In the category of Education: College or University, the winner is Project: Possibility SS12: Code for a Cause.

This is an event that educates computer science students about accessibility, making these students better equipped to develop accessible technology solutions for people with disabilities.

Sean Goggin from Project: Possibility is here today to accept this award. Congratulations.

In the Mobile Applications category, the winner is "Media Access Mobile." Media Access Mobile is mobile technology that enhances the user experience for multimedia presentations at cultural institutions, museums, exhibits, or other venues by providing synchronized text for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and synchronized audio description for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Media Access Mobile can also provide subtitles and audio tracks in multiple languages.

Larry Goldberg from the WGBH National Center for Accessible Media is here today to accept this award. Congratulations.

In the Geo-location Solutions category, the winner is Tiramisu Transit.

Tiramisu Transit is an app that intelligently crowd-sources information on bus schedules, timing, and space availability.

The app is written to be compliant with accessibility guidelines of various platforms and is intended to benefit people with and without disabilities who want helpful information for planning bus travel.

Aaron Steinfeld and John Zimmerman are here to represent Tiramisu Transit and accept this award. Congratulations.

In the Video Programming category, we have two winners.

First, we have Accessible Media Inc. (AMI). AMI's Described Video Guide builds awareness about video description while providing an accessible, aggregate daily list of described video programming to enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to plan their television viewing.

Robert Pearson & David Errington from AMI are here today to accept this award. Congratulations.

Second, we have the pleasure of recognizing the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, or SMPTE, who receives this award for the development of the SMPTE 2052 suite of Standards and Recommended Practices for "SMPTE Timed Text", which enabled television content delivered over Internet protocol to retain closed captions for the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Robert Seidel is here today to accept this award. Congratulations.

Congratulations to all of today's winners.

I want to personally thank each of you here today for your interest and contributions to accessibility, and the tremendous impact that each of your efforts will have on so many people.

Your work will mean that many more individuals can vote, operate their radios, enjoy cultural experiences, catch the bus, and benefit from video description.

Your efforts also mean that people with disabilities will benefit from our nation's incredible emerging communications technologies and the wonder that comes with them.

Before we go, let me also encourage everyone to visit the FCC's Technology Experience Center -- which is also on this floor -- for demonstrations of some of these great innovations.

Thank you.