

Chairman Tom Wheeler
February 2014 Open Meeting
Statement on Closed Captioning

Re: *Closed Captioning of Video Programming*, CG Docket No. 05-231; *Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. Petition for Rulemaking*, PRM11CG.

Today's item on Closed Captioning offers a great example of why what we do at the FCC matters – how our work has a meaningful impact on the lives of the American people.

We've heard from 12-year-old Tai Jensen, who described how her ability to develop problem-solving skills, talk with her friends, *and even learn a new language* is dependent on the quality of captioning on television. Claude Stout spoke about how closed captioning impacts everything from relating to his children to deciding whom to vote for. As Claude said in one of our meetings – “Closed captioning is what allows deaf people to hear.”

Their stories remind us that reliable and consistent access to news and information for deaf and hard-of-hearing communities is a *right*.

Thank you to Tai and Claude for sharing your stories, and thank you to everyone who made today's action possible.

Members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, alongside industry—NCTA, NAB, and MPAA—stepped up to the plate to help craft a set of rules that moves us toward improving captioning quality, while also assuring that vital news and other types of programming provide captioning.

This remains a work in progress. For example, I recognize that consumer groups are skeptical about whether the enhanced Electronic Newsroom Transcript procedures will be sufficient. At the same time, distributors and programmers are concerned about whether a single complaint might lead to unreasonable fines. With this accord, however, both have said, “Let's give it a try.” We will, of course, revisit the path that we've forged here to adjust it as new information becomes available. We all share the same goal: full and equal access to video programming for all Americans.

Almost all of us in the hearing world have benefited from advancements in audio technology. Today, we extend the benefits of new technology and new standards to deaf and hard-of-hearing persons.

While this process is not complete, our actions today are a strong step in the right direction. I applaud the leadership of NCTA, NAB, and MPAA and thank the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and the staff of the Disability Rights Office for their superb work on this item. Together with their colleagues in the Media Bureau, the Enforcement Bureau and the Office of the General Counsel, we have advanced the ball in a significant way.

Ensuring universal access is a critical and enduring value of this Commission. I am excited and hopeful for the future as we continue to take steps to advance this mission.