

Remarks of Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn (as prepared)

Accessibility Innovations Expo

Washington, DC

October 23, 2017

Good morning, everyone and welcome to the FCC's first ever Accessibility Innovations Expo. I am pleased to see such a tremendous turn out and thrilled by the level of enthusiasm for this important event. This Expo was created in the spirit of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and its theme, "Inclusion Drives Innovation" captures the tremendous power of public and private collaboration.

What a terrific platform for showcasing the kind of innovative technologies that can transform the lives of people with disabilities.

As you will see and experience firsthand, the exhibits showcased here today demonstrate that people with all abilities can thrive by taking advantage of groundbreaking and accessible technologies; and workplaces, and in turn, benefit directly from these advancements.

Before I go any further, I would be remiss if I failed to thank all the talented people who made this event possible. First, hats off to Pepco for the use of their beautiful gallery and to the FCC organizers -- the Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division and the Disability Rights Office in the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, as well as the FCC's Connect2Health Task Force. We are grateful for your joint effort in conceiving and organizing this event. Most of all, I want to extend my gratitude to each of you -- the companies and innovators here today. Those of us in attendance have an incredible opportunity to witness, learn and be inspired, by all the trail-blazing communications-based technologies and accessibility innovations on display.

As you visit the booths and exchange ideas, remember: we simply cannot afford to leave anyone behind in this 21st Century, internet-based economy. While there have been considerable improvements in accessibility to mainstream technology, too many Americans remain unable to utilize our most innovative advancements to their fullest potential. Collectively, we must work to change that reality.

There are more than 56 million people in our country, and over a billion people globally, with one or more disabilities and with advancements in medicine and our focus on fitness, those numbers will continue to climb as we live longer. So the time is now to close the digital divide that too many with disabilities face. We must ensure that technologies are accessible and that anyone and *everyone* is able to enjoy and benefit from the innovation over the horizon.

I'm proud to say that the FCC continues to engage in efforts to ensure that all members of our community have access to advanced communications services. At our recent Disability Advisory Committee, we outlined a variety of measures requiring Commission action -- from increasing the number of hours of video described programming for those who are blind or visually impaired . . . to improving how Americans with hearing loss access wireline and wireless communications services.

In addition, the FCC's Disability Rights Office continues to work closely with various groups and organizations to directly address disability-related matters. Similarly, the FCC's Connect2Health Task Force is engaged in efforts to better ensure that the benefits of broadband-enabled health technologies and solutions are available and accessible to everyone.

But the FCC cannot do it alone. I look forward to establishing more partnerships as we build a future that works for and is accessible to everyone!

As Maya Angelou once said, "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." So stay inspired and continue to use your talents in innovative ways in order to tap the broad potential of ALL Americans. Enjoy the Expo.