



H.R. 3101: The Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009

On June 26, 2009, Representative Edward Markey (D-MA) introduced “The Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009” (H.R. 3101). If enacted, this comprehensive disabilities communications legislation will amend the nation’s Communications Act to ensure that new Internet-enabled telephone and television products and services are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. It will also close existing disability gaps in telecommunications law. You can learn more about the bill on the website of the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT) at <http://www.COATaccess.org>. COAT has over 240 national, state, and community-based organizational affiliates that support the passage of this legislation.

Communications Access

- Requires access to phone-type equipment and services used over the Internet
(Current law: Section 255 requires telecommunications products and services to be accessible but does not extend to the Internet)
- Adds improved accountability and enforcement measures, including a clearinghouse and reporting obligations by providers and manufacturers
- Requires telephone products used with the Internet to be hearing aid compatible (HAC)
(Current law: HAC required on all wireline and many wireless phones)
- Allows use of Lifeline and Link-up universal service funds (USF) for broadband connection and service (Current law: Discounts only available for products and services on public telephone network)
- Allocates up to \$10 million/year for equipment used by people who are deaf-blind
(Currently: Inadequate state programs that distribute some free or discounted telephone equipment, but little available for people who are deaf-blind)
- Clarifies the scope of relay services to include calls between and among people with disabilities and requires Internet-based service providers to contribute to the Interstate Relay Fund
- Requires FCC to develop real-time text digital standard to replace TTY communications

Video Programming Access

- Requires caption decoder circuitry or display capability in all video programming devices, including PDAs, computers, iPods, cell phones, DVD players, TiVo devices and battery-operated TVs
(Current law: Caption decoder circuitry only required on TVs with screens at least 13 inches)
- Extends closed captioning obligations to television-type video programming distributed over the Internet: covers web-based video services that offer television programs, movies, web clips, and live video streaming; does not cover user-generated content (e.g., YouTube videos posted by students)
(Current law: Captioning required on most broadcast, cable and satellite TV shows)
- Requires easy access to closed captions via remote control and on-screen menus
- Requires easy access by blind people to television controls and on-screen menus
- Restores video description rules and requires access to televised emergency programming for people who are blind or have low vision

COAT

1629 K Street NW, Suite 503, Washington, DC 20006
202-521-4310 www.COATaccess.org