

Dear Senator _____:

I am writing to urge you to consider supporting or sponsoring the introduction of companion legislation to the Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009 (H.R. 3101).

On June 26, 2009, Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) introduced comprehensive legislation – H.R. 3101, The Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009 – to ensure that people with disabilities have access to emerging Internet-based communications and video programming technologies. This legislation is needed so that people with disabilities can be productive and independent participants of our society as our society becomes increasingly reliant on new digital and broadband-based technologies for participation in employment, education, civic involvement and other daily affairs. The proposed legislation would –

- require that mobile and other Internet-based telecommunications devices and equipment be fully hearing aid compatible, have accessible user interfaces, and offer people with disabilities use of a full range of text messaging and other popular services that are currently largely inaccessible;
- provide people who are deaf-blind with vital but costly technologies they need to communicate electronically;
- establish a process for the FCC to develop rules and standards for the provision of real-time text capability over digital technologies (to take the place of TTYs);
- allow Lifeline and Linkup funding to be used for broadband services needed for basic communication by people with disabilities;
- restore the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) modest video description rules and establish the FCC's authority to regulate in this area;
- require emergency announcements and similar information to be accessible to people who are blind or have low vision through audible presentation of on-screen alerts;
- ensure that video programming offered via the Internet will be accessible to people with disabilities via closed captioning and video description;
- call for all devices that receive and playback video programming to have accessible user interfaces and facilitate the ability of viewers to use captioning and description features;
- improve the accountability and implementation of the accessibility mandates through the establishment of a clearinghouse of information about service and equipment accessibility and usability; a meaningful FCC complaint process that holds industry accountable for their accessibility obligations; and judicial review of FCC action on accessibility complaints.

This legislation is critically needed so that people with disabilities are not left behind as innovative Internet-based communication and video programming technologies continue to advance. Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,