Don’t die to send a reply.

TDI teams with AT&T to fight texting while driving.

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TDI’S MISSION

“TDI provides leadership in achieving equal access to telecommunications, media, and information technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people.”

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Taking Up the Challenge

I am so excited and pleased to be the newly elected TDI President of the Board, as well as a board member! My regions include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. I’ve set up a TDI West Region Facebook page so if you are from any of these states I represent, go ahead and join us at the page!

It will be formidable to follow in former TDI President Roy Miller’s big footsteps but with the support of the present board members, Executive Director Claude Stout, and your help, I am confident that I am up to this new challenge for the next two years.

Let me introduce myself. I was diagnosed as hard of hearing at the tender age of 4 and fitted with a body type hearing aid. I had speech therapy through elementary school. I attended mainstream schools all the way up to college. I did not have note takers but I did have friends I could borrow notes from in my classes. I then went to Gallaudet for my graduate degree in education of the deaf which is where I learned sign language. CART was not around then so it was either learn sign or sink as lip reading was so (and is still) difficult. Living on the Gallaudet campus and immersed in sign language also helped tremendously to acquire expressive and receptive skills.

After three years of teaching in various deaf educational programs, I went to law school at Georgetown University law Center. While there, I interned at the national Center for law and the Deaf (NCLD). Upon graduation, I continued to work at NCLD as a staff attorney for 8 years before moving to Sacramento, California. At NCLD, I worked on legal issues affecting deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals in telecommunications, education, employment, medical, police, and other issues. In California, I worked at NorCal Center for the Deaf (as it was then called) for five years as an advocate, program manager, editor of the agency newsletter, and acting director. An exciting job opportunity came up with the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and I have been working at DOR now for nearly 20 years. I started at DOR as Project Coordinator of their California Assistive Technology Systems (CATS) Initiative program then administered the statewide Client Assistance Program until recently. I am now back in CATS as an administrator working with an Assistive Technology Advisory committee and California’s Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) on Assistive Technology for people with disabilities and their families. I also assist with the DOR’s Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) program which administers contracts with 7 TBI sites throughout the state to provide services to people with TBI to function in the community to the best of their ability.

As you can readily see from my background, I have an extensive knowledge and experience not only with deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals’ needs but also people with all types of disabilities. I have built up an extensive network of professional contacts in various fields ranging from federal, state, and local government entities as well as been part of a number of coalitions consisting of the consumer groups of deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and people with disabilities.

I also am the Chair of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD)
Technology committee, yahoo group of about 80 members who discuss technology topics ranging from visual alerting systems, 911, texting to 911, emergency alerting on TV, Videophone technology, IP relay, and other types of technology of interest to deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind consumers.

I am very proud to be part of TDI and have been since 1980 when I saw my first, “Blue Book” which some of you may remember was a small blue notebook binder. It has been thrilling to see the development of the “Blue Book” over the years.

I am enjoying the experience of being a TDI Board member as well as the President. My primary goals for my Presidency is to continue to work with Claude Stout, the Executive Director, on advocacy in the telecommunications and related social media areas on behalf of our constituency in “Shaping an Accessible World”. My other primary goals are to work on TDI’s upcoming 2015 conference and to monitor the fiscal health of TDI ongoing.

In closing, as President of TDI, with Claude Stout and the Board members, we will work together to continue to further the rights of our constituency to accessible social media and other technology as necessary for us to be independent.

All for Access,
Sheila Conlon Mentkowski
President, TDI
Western Region Board Member

Boards views

Visit TDI's new, interactive website at www.TDIforAccess.org
And help us shape an accessible world.
Capitol Commentary

“Can we live down the memory of causing one to lose a life, or to be permanently disabled one way or another as a result of our neglect or irresponsibility?”

BY CLAUDE STOUT
TDI Executive Director

With Much Gratitude to AT&T: the Benefits of “Don’t Drive, Don’t Text” Project

H ope you will enjoy reading about the “Don’t Drive, Don’t Text” project in this issue.

We want to share the results of the project with you. The project would not be possible without the support of AT&T. TDI extends its deepest appreciation to the officials at AT&T – Andrea Brands, Carol Wilner, Susan Diegelman, Susan Mazrui, Avalyn Jackson, and Sam Sappenstein.

For a few years, AT&T has been the corporate leader behind its “Texting & Driving: It Can Wait” project. The intent behind the project has become more crucial as time went on, as the volume of calls and minutes broke records on every succeeding year. Our lives and well-being are increasingly affected one way or another as we spend more time everyday to use the text devices.

AT&T understood very well, that in order for this project to be successful and meeting the key objectives of its national campaign with people with hearing disabilities, they have TDI send out the word via the videos in sign language and with captions about the dangers of texting while driving. We deeply appreciate the support of the students at Gallaudet University that took part in the production of the three videos. We worked closely on the videos with Sam Fabens and Joypreda Swaim of VoxGlobal, a consulting firm for AT&T, and Jane Jonas of Eyeth Studios, LLC, who did the filming/editing of the videos. Robert McConnell and Jim House played supportive roles in the production as well.

Be sure to check more about AT&T’s national campaign, http://www.itcanwait.com. You are welcome to take part in its campaign, by taking a pledge not to use text while driving on the road. Over five million have made their pledges for the campaign.

Jim House, the departing Director of Public Relations, TDI wrote a great feature article for this issue. You will be impressed with the data from the national campaign, and understand how serious this issue has become for participating Americans. We give you details on how to locate for our three YouTube videos. Let us give a warm welcome to the new Director of Public Relations, Don Cullen to TDI, who debuts as Managing Editor for this issue.

It is essential not to text while we drive. Sometimes we are tempted to do it, but let us remind ourselves that it is absolutely not safe to do it. If we are texting while driving, it is like taking the chance to speed more while on a curve, or going fast up the hill and not knowing what is down the hill. Can we live down the memory of causing one to lose a life, or to be permanently disabled one way or another as a result of our neglect or irresponsibility?

If it is imperative that we text an important message immediately to someone, all we have to do is pull over our cars to the shoulder of the road or a parking lot, and then to use our texting devices. As my dear mother reminded me a number of times, Benjamin Franklin said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” It will pay us in the long run to conform to our responsibilities of not texting and driving. Let us not play with the risks of producing an accident that we would be regretting for the rest of our lives. Each life is precious, and may you have a safe, sensible driving (or texting) experience everyday!
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“Technology has been a boon for many of us. It has brought the world together, allowing us to communicate with more people far and near. With today’s digital communications, it is now possible to communicate with a clerk at the store without “interpreters”.

“Technology has been a boon for many of us. It has brought the world together, allowing us to communicate with more people far and near. With today’s digital communications, it is now possible to communicate with a clerk at the store without “interpreters”.

During a focus group discussion on accessible technology at the US Access Board, an entire group of deaf participants, myself included, brainstormed on a perfect accessibility device. We came up with a “magic wand” that had a microphone we could point to any audio source, and a readout on the side of the wand would show the text transcribing the sound. According to the focus group moderator, a similar group of blind people wished for a wand they could use to point at signs or text in their environment, and it would speak out the text.

Technology has been a boon for many of us. It has brought the world together, allowing us to communicate with more people far and near. With today’s digital communications, it is now possible to communicate with a clerk at the store without “interpreters”. For example, we have text-to-speech where a scanner reads all the letters and numbers in a document and speaks to the reader like the wand for the blind group. That is the easy part.

The not so easy part is the reverse where machines like the wand for the deaf and hard of hearing group that can interpret free-flowing speech into text. Our pursuit of the perfect system consists of two overarching goals: speaker independency and unlimited vocabulary. The ideal system would capture everything that is said by anyone with zero errors.

However, today’s voice recognition systems are hampered by several realities. According to the US Census Bureau, the 2010 Census tabulated the responses of nearly 300 million people in the United States and categorized about 381 different languages in addition to the various spoken and sign languages that are in wide use by readers of TDI World. While we can appreciate the diversity, the immense variety of voice inflections and accents creates a nightmare for program developers seeking to create effective algorithms for automatic speech recognition.

Out of two types of speech recognition systems, one is found in automatic telephone menus in certain businesses. For example when you call your bank, you will hear a voice menu for different functions. Instead of pushing a number on your phone keypad, you will need to say specific words such as WITHDRAW, BALANCE, TRANSFER, DEPOSIT and other phonetically distinct words. The system looks for specific vocal patterns in each response to direct the call to the proper “department” or function.

In most situations, this type of voice recognition system with a limited vocabulary base will work for many speakers independently.

The other type of voice recognition system allows for large vocabularies, but only one speaker who has trained the system to understand his unique speech patterns. For many years, voice recognition has been used in office settings where doctors and lawyers dictate letters and other documents for their staff to produce.

More recently, this type of application has found its way into mobile technology. In response to the
LIMITING THE TIME A PATIENT WAITS.
NO MATTER THE ROOM.

{ POWERFUL ANSWERS }

At Verizon, we’ve gathered some of the greatest technological minds to fight the toughest diseases. Using supercomputers, fiber optics, and the cloud, our innovators are creating new ways to speed up more informed diagnoses. Uploading the sum total of knowledge on treatments to our secure networks, so doctors can reduce months of research into seconds of search time.

Because the world’s biggest challenges, deserve even bigger solutions.

verizon.com/powerfulanswers
demand for less distraction while driving, phone manufacturers have begun to include third party apps to help dial-by-voice and other features. You can even ask your phone to do an online search for the nearest pizzeria and receive audible driving directions. Believe me, it is not as easy as it looks. It looks great on paper, but in practice, often the end result is riddled with errors and frequent repetition.

What does this have to do with us? Researchers and engineers are seeking to use voice recognition to bypass the high cost of providing accommodations for people with hearing disabilities. I can appreciate the innovative spirit among many engineers whose ultimate goal is to increase access. The Americans with Disabilities Act only requires effective communication, which takes into account the communication needs of the users, and the resources of the party providing the services. That said, I do believe there are situations where a voice recognition solution would be appropriate, but once we take a hard look at quality issues, I sometimes wonder if this is a case of being penny wise and pound foolish where saving a few dollars at the expense of quality service is happening more than we care to admit. I’m all for minimizing costs only if that is the right solution that provides full and equal access for the parties involved.

For several years we have had captioned telephone services where an operator re-speaks what he hears from the other person. The speech recognition program is trained for that particular operator. My experiences on those calls have not matched the functional equivalency that I enjoyed when making phone calls as a hard of hearing child when all I had was a hearing aid and an amplified phone. Now a new service, InnoCaption has broken the speech recognition ceiling and uses steno captioning to provide its service to deaf and hard of hearing mobile users everywhere.

Voice recognition is also entering the broadcast captioning arena. Attempts to increase captioning without doing it properly can result in gibberish on the screen insults us more than if there were no captions at all. Thankfully the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has new standards pending that will require TV captions to be accurate, synchronous, timely, and not obstruct other important visual information for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

To put this all in perspective, we can use the analogy of speech reading. Many of us have been to an audiologist where we undergo a battery of tests that determine our hearing level and speech comprehension. Many of us can and do lip-read quite well in real life, but the fact remains that an estimated 30% of the English language can be accurately read on the lips while the rest of our understanding is based on educated guesswork. Have machines surpassed the ability of humans to comprehend speech like the imaginary wand? I think not, but do keep trying!
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Download Purple’s free software and app today!
[www.purple.us/trynow](http://www.purple.us/trynow)
The Uber Revolution has Arrived, Just in Time

Welcome to our first ever Tech Bytes section! I’m quite passionate about technology, and make it a point to read at least a hundred articles per day to make sure I stay atop emerging technologies. This section is my opportunity to share bite-sized chunks of awesomely interesting tech, apps, and services that I think you’d love to know about!

Quick, tell me your top complaints about taxi cabs!

“Many don’t take credit cards… Writing back and forth is such a pain just to tell them where I want to go! They tend to run up the meter to try to make more money! Often they have poor attitudes! It takes forever just to find a taxi cab!”

Based on those complaints, why would anyone in their right mind take a cab? Of course, one might say they don't find a taxi cab!

“Just exactly what is Uber, this amazingly disruptive company that has taxi drivers running (driving) scared? What does this mean for deaf and hard of hearing customers?

Why, everything!”

Uber’s straightforward interface makes getting around town easier than ever.

www.uber.com
Type of technology: mobile phone app
Supported by:

OS    Android    Windows
have a choice. But that's just it! You DO have a choice! In many major cities across the United States, a company called Uber aims to make taxi cabs history. What Apple did for the smart phone industry is what Uber is doing to the taxi cab industry by completely upending them. It's gotten to the point where nearly every taxi cab company out there is in an uproar demanding that the government shut down Uber because they feel they cannot compete with Uber.

Just exactly what is Uber, this amazingly disruptive company that has taxi drivers running (driving) scared? What does this mean for deaf and hard of hearing customers? Why, everything.

You begin by installing the app on your phone. Once done, you then set up your account. All par for the course. What happens after you finish setting up your account is where the app begins showing you its true potential. You'll see a map with a couple of cars driving around. Those cars are Uber cars! You'll also see a black box saying Set Pickup Location, along with an estimate for how long you'll be waiting for an Uber car. Just touch Set Pickup Location, make sure the address of your location is correct. Now the Uber cars know where you are! You should see a button at the bottom that says Fare Quote. Tap that. Pop in the address of where you want to go. It'll then show you an estimate of the fare cost. The total fare shouldn't exceed that quote. If you're happy with the quote, hit REQUEST uberX.

That's it! Now you simply wait. If you watch the map, you'll see one of the Uber drivers confirm they're on the way, along with an estimate of how long before they arrive. You'll see them driving to you on the map.

They'll arrive, pick you up with a grin, and whisk you off to where you want to go without having to ask you where you want to go (since you already put it in Uber!). Once you arrive, you're done. No tipping – Uber designed the fares so that customers don't have to feel it necessary to tip. Don't worry about paying the driver either; Uber will automatically charge your credit card as soon as the trip is finished. The only thing you need to do is thank the driver, get out of the car, and walk away.

There's one more thing you can do, but is completely optional: you also can rate the driver on Uber. If the driver gets a poor rating, Uber will follow up with the driver. This way, you know you'll be able to rely on a consistently good experience!

Uber offers more than simply UberX – they also offer black/SUV Uber cars if you want to drive in style or Uber XL/family cars if you're hauling a family or a group of friends. You even can split fare! Try it for yourself if you're ever in a major city and want to have an unique cab experience!

For more information, see: www.uber.com

Do you have suggestions as to what technology should be featured on Tech Bytes? Do you have any feedback you’d love to share? Please do feel free to contact Don Cullen via email at dcullen@tdiforaccess.org, or call TDI at (301) 563-9112!

**AN OVERVIEW OF UBER’S SAFETY STANDARDS IN DC**

Uber’s technology platform brings an unprecedented degree of transparency and accountability to transportation in DC.

Here's an overview of what we're doing to ensure you have the best possible experience:

**What you can expect when you request a ride with the Uber app:**

Every driver that uses Uber's technology platform must pass a background check and ongoing quality reviews stronger than anything that is required of taxi drivers in the District.

Every uberX ride requested through the app is insured with at least $1M in liability insurance – 50x higher than what is required of DC taxis.

Even before pickup, you are given your driver’s name, photo, car type, and license plate number, so that you can make sure you’re getting in the right car with the right driver.

You are able to call your driver through the app using an anonymized phone number. That way, you can talk to your driver without ever sharing your personal contact information.
Common Sense
(Taken from Thomas Paine)

Driving is difficult enough not to have to worry about other drivers’ bad habits. Before mobile devices were developed and sold, it appeared we would have to be on the watch for inebriated drivers or people either shaving their beards, plucking their eyebrows, or applying lipstick while driving. Now, with the burgeoning popularity of mobile devices, we need to be on guard to be alert to texting drivers.

In writing this preface, I ‘surfed the Internet’ to see what would surface when I entered “texting and driving” and of course a number of websites on this topic surfaced. The search results showed a number of corporations, government agencies both federal and state, and other entities producing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on the dangers of texting and driving. Most of the videos seemed to have captioning, except for one that had gone viral but lacked captioning. When one produces a PSA or any other media related material on texting and driving, accessibility should be taken into consideration so we viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind can learn from the PSA as well.

I wanted to share a story that horrified me when I first saw it on Facebook. Apparently a woman in England was texting on not just one but two mobile devices while driving. She was driving her Jaguar at a speed of 70 MPH when she slammed into the back of another driver who was killed instantly. The woman driving the Jaguar initially denied using the mobile devices while driving when questioned by investigators. During the investigation, the mobile devices were found to have been in use -- the driver had sent a text message just before the crash while at around the same time, she received one on another device. Prosecutors in this case noted that the texting driver had been caught using her mobile phone behind the wheel in the past and her driver’s license has been suspended twice, once in 2009 and 2012. As a result, the judge sentenced her to 6 years in prison and her driver’s license has been again suspended for 8 years. I was just appalled reading this story as it shows one person’s callous disregard for other peoples’ lives.

This article is full of excellent information on why one should NOT text while driving. Please do take the time to look over the resources and share with your family, friends, and colleagues. Remember: texting is never worth a life.

— Sheila Conlon Mentkowski
President, TDI, Western Region Board Member
“Please don’t text and drive.” Sharing these five simple words with a distracted driver will often encourage him or her to put the phone down and remain focused on the road. Why is speaking up so important? Well because it could save a life. Texting while driving is involved in over 200,000 accidents every year, often causing injuries and deaths. We are especially concerned about this at TDI since many drivers who are deaf or hard of hearing use at least one type of mobile device for communicating by text or video.

Texting has become one of the most popular ways to communicate. While most people continue to use their wireless devices for voice calls, many of them turn to text. Two groups emerged as the early adopters of texting; teenagers and people who are deaf or hard of hearing use at least one type of mobile device for communicating by text or video.

While many can relate to a close call from texting while driving, the research on the subject further drives home the risks associated with texting while driving. According to the Virginia Tech Transportation Research Institute, texting drivers are much more likely to be in an accident.

From the perspective of a deaf person, it is liberating to have options available to us now that we did not have while growing up. Deaf and hard of hearing people who are in their twenties or thirties would not have had much experience in dealing with the lack of access such as captioning or using the telephone. Some of the old-timers will remember the days where we had to ask our parents to arrange our.

**A FEW FACTS:**

- **97% KNOW ITS DANGEROUS**
  97 percent of teens know that texting while driving is dangerous, but 43 percent admit to still doing it.
  (Source: AT&T Wireless Survey)

- **77% HAVE SEEN THEIR PARENTS DO IT**
  77 percent of teens have seen their parents texting while driving.
  (Source: AT&T Wireless Survey)

**MORE LIKELY TO BE IN AN ACCIDENT**

Texting drivers are much more likely to be in an accident.
(Source: Virginia Tech Transportation Research Institute)
dates for us over the phone or being constantly denied jobs just because we could not use the phone at all. These collective experiences gave rise to the birth of TDI and it is an important part of our heritage.

Some deaf and hard of hearing drivers do boast superior peripheral vision as a way to compensate for their hearing disability. They claim they are able to focus on the road and watch a conversation out of the corner of their eye from someone in the passenger seat or the back seat. A few deaf drivers, especially those that sign, use the phone in a windshield holder (similar to using a GPS) for video calls, as they feel it puts them on a functionally equivalent basis as with hearing drivers who are able to talk hands-free. After all, it is not much different than signing back and forth to a passenger with one eye on the road.

Some experienced drivers do ask that there be no talking or signing conversations from passengers if the traffic requires more attention. Because text or video calls behind the wheel requires far more skill in shifting attention back and forth from the task of driving, TDI does not condone any use of technology that makes anybody an unsafe driver.

“While we seek to promote access to telecommunications for deaf and hard of hearing people, we are aware that the liberation of mobile phones also carries a responsibility to use these devices safely,” said Claude L. Stout, Executive Director, when TDI announced their partnership with AT&T’s It Can Wait® campaign. TDI’s videos about texting while driving are available at:

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8TAkl0wS00
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt0L1WkEQpQ

No Text is worth a life. Check out this new video from @TDIforAccess that highlights how you can kick the habit: http://bit.ly/1q8jxz #ItCanWait

TDI’s videos are at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8TAkl0wS00
No Text is Worth a Life - It Can Wait
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt0L1WkEQpQ
Texting While Driving: Break the Habit

Other information about texting and driving can be found at:
National Safety Council
www.nsc.org
Virginia Tech Transportation Institute Research: www.vtti.vt.edu
TXTNG & DRVING... IT CAN WAIT www.itcanwait.org/
It Can Wait Simulator www.itcanwaitsimulator.org/

PUBLIC OPINION everywhere is frowning on distracted driving caused by texting, just like driving under the influence of drinking or drugs. Beginning with AT&T, other major industry stakeholders began to acknowledge publicly that the misuse of their products, especially on the road can have fatal implications.

“We are committed to the fight against the texting while driving epidemic - whether it’s reminding customers that texting can wait or urging drivers to pledge to never text and drive again,” said Andrea Brands, Director of Consumer Safety and Education at AT&T. Brands adds, “We are thrilled that Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. plays such a crucial role in the effort to remind all drivers - including those who are deaf and hard of hearing - that no text is worth a life.”

Working with Robert McConnell and Jane Jonas of Eyeth Studios, TDI hosted a safe driving awareness event at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. We set up a texting while driving simulator on a laptop with a steering wheel and foot pedals that linked to each participant’s cell phone so students could experience the dangers first-hand. Approximately 20 deaf and hard of hearing students participated, and we were able to document useful video footage in sign language about the perils of texting while driving.

TDS videos are at:

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8TAkl0wS00
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt0L1WkEQpQ

TXTNG & DRVING... IT CAN WAIT

Here are some examples:
@ATT @TDIforAccess and @GallaudetU have teamed up to spread awareness of dangers of texting and driving: http://bit.ly/1nGt74Z #ItCanWait

No text is worth a life. Check out this new video from @TDIforAccess that highlights how you can kick the habit: http://bit.ly/1q8jxz #ItCanWait

TDI’s videos are at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8TAkl0wS00
No Text is Worth a Life - It Can Wait
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt0L1WkEQpQ
Texting While Driving: Break the Habit

Other information about texting and driving can be found at:
National Safety Council
www.nsc.org
Virginia Tech Transportation Institute Research: www.vtti.vt.edu
TXTNG & DRVING... IT CAN WAIT www.itcanwait.org/
It Can Wait Simulator www.itcanwaitsimulator.org/
remember no text is worth a life and share the message. Here are some things you can do to make sure you “arrive alive”.

- Use #X in text messages, social media or email – to pause the conversation before you drive to let friends know you will respond once you safely reach your destination.

- Download a free app like AT&T DriveMode® that automatically replies to incoming texts while you’re on the road to let people know you’ll get back to them later.

- Turn off your cell phone or put it in the glove compartment or some other inaccessible place while driving.

- If you can, let your passenger become your designated texter who can read your messages for you and reply accordingly.

- Pull over in a safe place if you need to have an urgent conversation.

- Take the pledge at ItCanWait.com and ask your friends to join you. There are more details to these hints as well as many other resources and tools you can use.

- Spread the word through social media - here are some samples:

  - @ATT @TDIforAccess and @GallaudetU teamed up to spread awareness of dangers of texting and driving: http://bit.ly/1nGt74Z #ItCanWait

  - No text is worth a life. Check out this new video from @TDIforAccess that highlights how you can kick the habit: http://bit.ly/1q8jxxz #ItCanWait

Please visit ItCanWait.com for more information about texting and driving.

1 National Safety Council
2 Virginia Tech Transportation Institute
Research: www.vtti.vt.edu
Will the Deaf Finally be Called to Serve in the Military?

Sgt. Daniel Bauer has been a policeman at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., for eight years. Trained and certified by the Metropolitan Police Department, the fact that he is deaf has never gotten in the way of doing his job, he said. Now he’s hoping that legislation recently filed in Congress will enable him to switch uniforms — to Air Force blue.”

– Airforcetimes.com

Shockwaves hit the deaf community when realization that a bill had been proposed by Representative Mark Takano (D) of California 41st district, which would be intended to require a demonstration program on the accession as Air Force officers of candidates with auditory impairments.

“H.R. 5296, filed by Rep. Mark Takano, D-California, on July 30, would have the Air Force launch a demonstration program that would allow 15 to 20 deaf and hearing impaired people to serve. Except for a hearing impairment, the successful applicants would have to meet all other requirements needed to serve as an Air Force officer, according to the bill.”

– Airforcetimes.com

A critic of the bill stated: “Once you put on the uniform you shouldn’t have
to be in a special job. Your job is as an Air Force guy,” said Donald Pickard of Florida, a retired Air Force fighter pilot. “There is a place for [disabled] people, absolutely. But give them a civilian job, give them a military job but in a civilian slot.”

The Defense Department excludes from service those who are deaf, use a hearing aid or have a cochlear implant. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen, a Department of Defense spokesman, said that is for good reason.

“In all areas of military life, but especially in combat, an individual’s life and the lives of his or her comrades may depend on what individuals can hear. Situations could occur where hearing impairment would not only result in injury or loss of life, but could jeopardize a unit’s mission,” he said in an email. “Individuals who are physically disqualified for military duty can and do become civilian members of the team. The work they perform for the Department and our country is valuable and rewarding but without the rigors of military duty.

The proposed legislation is a companion to a bill introduced in the Senate in December by Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who has noted the military allows service members who acquire a disability while serving their country to remain on active duty.

Takano, who represents the California School for the Deaf in Riverside and co-chairs the Bipartisan Congressional Deaf Caucus, and Harkin were inspired by the story of Keith Nolan, an Army ROTC cadet in California who could not advance because he could not pass the hearing test, said Brett Morrow, a spokesman for Takano.

News of this bill proved to be quite controversial. Nick Khamhou Dethoudo Chaleunphone commented on Military.com saying:

“As someone who’s already serving with the US Military in the US Coast Guard as an Auxiliary Member, I’m also a deaf person and an Intersex person. I’m one of the first known deaf US Coast Guard Auxiliarist and I am all for it. I’m a prime example of how the US Coast Guard utilizes those with a disability and are able to contribute to the US Coast Guard Mission without hindering the mission and operations. I would think that they can let deaf & hard of hearing people in and restrict them from front line combat jobs and let them do combat support jobs such as Medical, communications, IT technology, Cyberwarfare or even logistics. It would free up more able-bodied person for Frontline work. Even other countries like Israel for example, allows those with a disability to serve in the Military in areas such as Air defense, Intelligence, Communications, Cyberwarfare, Public Affairs and logistics.”

Keith Doane, who is aspiring to enlist as soon as the military begins recruitment, stated “80% of US military functions are not in combat zones. 24% of Iraqi/Afghanistan veterans have a degree of hearing loss, and they were booted from active duty. Let them remain in active duty. See the last part of this article: “If it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work. If it does, maybe we’ve found something better.” Let’s do some innovation and show the result.”

Joe Bacarella saw the statement, and posted an argument: “All I am saying is that the U.S. military should concentrate on effective warfare not social engineering. As stated in the above article by the DoD Spokesman, Navy Lt. Cmdr Nate Christensen, “hearing impairment may result not only in injury or loss of life but could jeopardize a unit’s mission”. Mr.
MILITARY SERVICE FOR THE DEAF?
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Doane, please allow me to explain further... The military exists to carry out their mission. No mission success equals F A I L U R E. The military doesn't do failure well... It's not in their charter; That Sir, is understanding a real context.

Joe then responded to another commentator adding: “It’s nice to see you support deaf community rights, however, their rights [conflict] against my will to live. Have you ever served in the military? I have served in the U.S. Navy and my life and the others on my aircrew depended, yes depended, upon our ability to communicate verbally. Our mission involved communications in a high stress, life threatening environment... How would you adapt one of a kind equipment to the needs of the deaf community? How would the deaf community use sound powered headsets so common in the U.S. Navy fleet?”

Don Cullen stepped in to respond to Joe Bararella’s comment saying: “Good points brought up here. Except for one crucial factor: 80% of US military functions are not in combat zones. Let me say that again. 80% of US military functions are not in combat zones. My family has served in the military for a long time, and only half of them have actually seen combat. There’s plenty of positions the deaf would do quite well that involve science, technology, engineering, and math.

You cite the danger of sending the deaf into combat as communications are crucial. You have a valid point. That only happens to 20% of US military functions; what about the other 80%? If you were arguing to prohibit the deaf from being deployed to those combat zones, then I could see — even to a degree, support — your reasoning. But to prohibit the deaf from the non-combat zones? I have yet to see you offer up strong logic that’d justify barring the deaf from serving in non-combat positions.

Israel has recognized this, and have a deaf unit serving in their military in non-combative positions. The military education and training has benefited those in the deaf unit. Their military hasn’t imploded as of yet. They’re actually doing just fine.”

GovTrack.us, a website that tracks bills’ progress as they move through Congress up to the point of the President signing the bill into law, had a rather grim prognosis for the H.R. 5296 bill currently referred to the House Armed Services committee (chaired by Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon [R-CA25]): “0% chance of being enacted”, with only “2% chance of getting past committee”. The committee consists of 34 republicans and 27 democrats. The bill has four co-sponsors (all democrats): Garamendi, John [D-CA3], Tsongas, Niki [D-MA3], Van Hollen, Chris [D-MD8], and Waxman, Henry [D-CA33].

Quoted text and comments from above are from both airforcetimes.com (Bryant Jordan) and military.com (Kristin Davis). Keith Dolan’s website can be found at: http://cadetnolannow.wordpress.com/

Editor’s Note: On February 14, 2014, TDI Executive Director Claude Stout sent a letter to U.S. Senator Carl Levin, D-MI, who was then the Chair of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. The letter encouraged the Committee to support a multi-year demonstration program that’d see the recruitment of deaf and hard of hearing military personnel. Stout pointed out important benefits such as heightened visual integration ability, high tolerance of high noise environments and ability to communicate easily via sign language in spite of noise, increase in number of recruits to help counter trend of declining recruitment rates, and opportunities to enhance existing technologies that would benefit wounded warriors & veterans. It would also especially help decrease cost of force attrition, retention, and replacement.

Do you have any feedback you’d love to share about this article? Please do feel free to contact Don Cullen via email at dcullen@tdiforaccess.org!
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Communications & Video

Accessibility Act of 2010:
The FCC released a Second Report and Order implementing the part of the CVAA that requires Internet browsers and websites to support accessibility to ACS on mobile devices for users that are blind or have low vision. Not much of a deaf/hard of hearing issue except that it touches on requiring access for deaf-blind where it is technically feasible. There was not much information available to put in the record to support more accessibility requirements for deaf-blind users, but this ruling puts another access issue for deaf-blind on FCC’s radar and the Commission will be looking into it in the future. Here below are excerpts from FCC’s announcement today:

On April 29, 2013, the FCC released a Report and Order to implement section 718 and part of section 716 of the Communications Act. The Report and Order does the following:

Section 718:
Requires Internet browsers installed on mobile phones to be accessible to and usable by individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment, unless doing so is not achievable. This requirement applies when Internet browsers are used for advanced communications services. These requirements apply to Internet browsers installed on mobile phones and equipment used for advanced communications services that are manufactured on or after October 8, 2013.

Section 716:
Requires Internet browsers installed on equipment used for advanced communications services, such as computers, laptops, and tablets used for e-mail, to be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable. This requirement applies when Internet browsers are used for advanced communications services.

IP-Captioning:
New rules were issued by the FCC for owners, producers, and distributors to provide closed captioning of their video programs that are delivered online after they were aired on television (commonly referred to as IP-captioning). The rules established an implementation schedule that started September 30, 2012, for full-length prerecorded television programming that a distributor shows for the first time on the Internet and continued through March 31, 2013, when the requirements were extended to live and near-live programming. On September 30, 2013, programming that is edited for Internet distribution must be captioned. Then for archival video programming that is already in a distributor’s Internet inventory, the distributor must add captions within 45 days after the video programming is shown on TV with captions on or after March 30, 2014. The grace period for captioning archival programming is reduced to 30 days in 2015, and then to 15 days beginning in 2016 and onward.

Text-to-911:
Shortly after the last Board meeting in November, the four major

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telecommunications carriers (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon) announced a joint agreement with the two leading public safety industry groups (NENA and APCO) to roll out text-to-911 by May 15, 2014. Since the nationwide implementation has already started with trials in certain jurisdictions and the adoption by 6,300 PSAPs will be long and varied, the carriers suggested a standardized error fall-back message that basically tells the caller by text “Your call cannot be completed, please call 911 by voice or TTY”, and that will be in place by June 30, 2013. The consumer groups applauded the measures, even though we were not consulted for our feedback prior to the announcement.

In December, the FCC came out in support of these initiatives in the form of a notice of proposed rulemaking. TDI and the consumer groups formally responded with comments to one part of the NPRM addressing the error message implementation and proposed ideas for a public education/outreach campaign. The consumer groups pushed for a standardized easy-to-understand error bounce-back message and urged the FCC to allocate funds for a public education program because texting at this time would not transmit location identifying information and the dispatcher will need to confirm the location before sending assistance. We did not file reply comments.

The other part of the NPRM addressed the scope of the initiative, whether it should be extended beyond the four major carriers and other issues. The consumer groups urged the Commission in the reply comments to extend support for text-to-911 to all carriers, regardless of size because even with all four carriers participating, there will be gaps in certain areas of the country – not only in rural areas, but also pockets in inner cities where the major carriers do not provide services. We also asked the FCC to require all advanced communication services to be part of the text-to-911, including the error messages if necessary and reiterated our request for full funding of educational outreach programs to be conducted by nongovernmental nationwide and local community groups.

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911):

Shortly after the industry announcement on text-to-911, the FCC issued a notice of inquiry. The Consumer Groups urged the Commission to take the lead in establishing and mandating consistent standards and accessibility requirements for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911). This will require the Commission to work to remove all necessary jurisdictional barriers and create a governing framework. Every American regardless of his or her disability has a right to easy and convenient access to emergency services no matter where in the country he or she lives or is visiting. The Consumer Groups also urge the Commission to make sure that the legal and statutory framework allows the Commission to ensure efficient and accurate transmissions of all NG911 service. We believe that the Commission is in the best position to lead the transformation to NG911 and this leadership is necessary to avoid inconsistency, confusion, waste, and barriers to accessing NG911.

Comparision between today’s 9-1-1 service and the NG911 standards.
VRS Reform:

Throughout the last six months, there were a number of meetings between officials at the FCC on the eighth floor, the staff of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, and representatives of consumer groups, including TDI, NAD, ALDA, and DHHCAN. The latest we get from the FCC is that they are taking in our recommendations in the following areas:

A. Interoperability and portability of VRS services and equipment. The FCC is leaning toward contracting with an independent third party to certify that each specific VRS service is interoperable.

B. The FCC appears to go along with our call for a VRS reference platform that will serve as a basis for multiple VRS applications.

C. The FCC intends to contract with a third party to do neutral outreach efforts to publicize all forms of TRS, more so with hearing parties that either are not aware of this benefit, or have been reluctant to use any TRS service to call their contacts that are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled. We have asked the FCC to reimburse VRS providers for their marketing efforts to promote their brand name services.

D. The FCC is leaning toward designating some amounts of funds to National Science Foundation for some research projects that would produce progress in interoperability, as well as advanced technology for VRS and other forms of TRS. We have asked the FCC to reimburse VRS providers for their individual research and development projects.

We anticipate that the FCC will issue a Report and Order to announce such initiatives within a week or two. Some delays may occur with the Commission undergoing a transition after the departure of Chairman Genachowski and Commissioner McDowell.

IP-CTS:

The FCC circulated some draft emergency rules that would require any new consumer that wants to use Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP-CTS) service to register confirming that they have at least a certain dB hearing loss, originally intended as 90 dB, then lowered to 71 dB, and then 40 dB. This was in response to what they called as an exponential increase in the last two years in IP-CTS. One provider may have not taken sufficient measures to ensure that every client it took in really needed the IP-CTS service. We fought to have this dB requirement dropped, citing that our hearing loss is largely diverse, depending on onset and progression of loss. Also, there are environmental factors that play into how well we hear with some level of interference. Even some individuals report that their hearing loss can vary from day to day, sometimes as a result of tinnitus. The FCC subsequently dropped the dB requirement, and went forward with other emergency rules for IP-CTS. With the new emergency rules, it prohibited referral fees for obtaining new clients, and it required providers to distribute/upgrade firmware to render the IP-CTS devices as operating with the captions in a default-off setting. It also made clear that any provider can distribute free devices to those whose income exceeds four times the federal poverty guideline, and that those who
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do not meet this benchmark would need to pay at least $75 for each IP-CTS device. It has been about two months since the emergency rules were issued. TDI and HLAA have received at least 2000 complaints from IP-CTS customers that were upset with the default-off captions setting. We asked the FCC that they reconsider their decision on the default-off captions setting. We cited that this interfered with the IP-CTS users’ functional equivalency standards for accessibility and usability. Gallaudet Technology Access Program (TAP) also released the results of its IP-CTS survey, which elicited more than 3,000 responses. The results of this survey basically refuted the FCC’s claims that there was widespread fraud/abuse with the IP-CTS service. The FCC has indicated that they remain alarmed and worried about what they called a “runaway” growth of IP-CTS. We will work with them to make sure IP-CTS is provided in the future to new users that really need the service. We will also tell them that we cannot stop the growth of those that really need the service, and that it is the ADA that gives them the right to use relay services to contact their families, friends, and others in the community.

**Legislation to Expand Captioning and Improve Access to Movies:**

On March 13, 2013 U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced two new bills that will expand access to captioning and image narration in movie theaters and airplanes.

The Captioning and Image Narration to Enhance Movie Accessibility (CINEMA) Act would amend Title III of the ADA to require movie theater complexes of two or more theaters to make captioning and video description available for all films at all showings. Video description is a process that allows an individual who is blind or visually impaired to have access to the key visual elements of the programming by contemporaneous audio narrated descriptions of the actions, settings, facial expressions, costumes, and scene changes during the natural pauses in the audio portion of the programming, usually through headphones.

The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act would amend the Air Carriers Access Act to require that air carriers make captioning and video description available for visually-displayed entertainment programming—live televised events, recorded programming, and motion pictures—that is available in-flight for passengers. In instances where the programming is only available through the use of an individual touch screen or other contact-sensitive controls, the bill would authorize the U.S. Access Board to promulgate accessibility standards so that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who are blind or visually impaired, can operate the displays independently.

TDI and other consumer groups have offered to provide feedback for specifics of these two bills.

**International Telecommunication Union Meeting at Gallaudet on June 3-4:**

TDI and Gallaudet Technology Access Program (Gallaudet TAP) have volunteered to handle logistics work for a meeting of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which will take place at Gallaudet on June 3-4. ITU is putting together a document on relay services, and it felt a meeting here in the U.S. especially in the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. would help it gather some information and material to produce a comprehensive report on all forms of relay services that are offered here in America and abroad. Invitations have been sent to key contacts in government, industry, and consumer groups to take part in this international standards body process. This paper, when published, will be vital for other
countries that haven’t established their own national relay service programs. The rapporteur for this ITU meeting will be John Lee, who is with BlackBerry in Canada. Andrea Saks and others from ITU will participate as observers.

**Proposed Transition in Regulatory Environment from TDM to Internet Protocol:**

TDI and other consumer groups are participating in meetings with industry and a few proceedings with the FCC to address one of the “big picture” issues facing telecom regulation: the evolution of the Public Switched Telephone Network (“PSTN”) from “legacy” time-division multiplexing (“TDM”) systems toward an Internet protocol (“IP”) based network. The transition from the traditional PSTN to IP has been a hot topic at the Commission and within the industry, as consumers increasingly “cut the cord” on landline copper networks and rely on mobile wireless or IP-enabled communications technologies running on broadband networks. However, TDI, other consumer groups, and small carriers have warned that we get into the transition toward IP, the FCC maintains its regulatory authority in areas of accessibility and consumer protection over communications networks. AT&T is proposing that the FCC allows them to conduct a number of trials in some areas, and produce some results and findings before the FCC and U.S. Congress decide on the proper arrangements for a smooth transition from TDM to IP.

Consumer groups representing people with disabilities attended a briefing by Verizon. Verizon is asking us to consider supporting their plans to propose legislation with U.S. Congress to have the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) oversee the IP ecosystem in areas of anti-trust issues, product safety, and acceptable business practices, etc. Verizon contends that the FCC may have jurisdiction over a number of broadband providers, but not so with third party software developers, and others that make up the ecosystem. Verizon assured us that it would not take away the FCC’s role in promoting and enforcing accessibility in the communications market.

**Chronology of Major Meetings/Events/Activities in which TDI participated from November 2012 –April 2013:**

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS:**

(December 5) TDI issued an eNote to warn our members and the general public on safeguarding themselves and their wireless devices against theft.


(January 8) TDI’s lawyer Tamar Finn spoke by telephone with the offices of Commissioners Clyburn and Rosenworcel about the Consumer...
(January 22) HLAA, ALDA, Hands & Voices, NAD, TDI, DHHCAN, and RERC-TA submitted comments to the FCC's request for updated information for its review of its Hearing Aid Compatibility regulations.
(January 25) TDI signed on to the request from TelePacific, ACN Communications Services, Inc., Level 3 Communications, and TDS Metrocom, LLC to the FCC asking that the Commission refresh the record and take expedited action to update its copper retirement rules to preserve and promote affordable broadband over copper.
(January 28) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CCASDHH, DHHCAN, TAP, RERC-TA filed a comment in response to AT&T's and NTCA's petition to launch a proceeding concerning the TDM-to-IP transition.
(February 21) TDI issued its first in a series of three eNotes to invite and remind our members and others to participate in Gallaudet Technology Access Program's Captioned Telephone Service Survey. Reminder eNotes were sent out on March 3 and March 7.
(February 25) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CCASDHH, DHHCAN, TAP, RERC-TA filed a reply to comments related to AT&T and NTCA's petition to launch a proceeding concerning the TDM-to-IP transition.
(February 25) TDI, NAD, TAP, AADB met with the FCC CGB and Office of Strategic Planning to discuss the VRS reform NPRM. http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022125674
(February 26) TDI, ALDA, NAD, DHHCAN, CPADO, CCASDHH, ASDB filed a comment in the FCC proceeding on misuse of IP CTS.
(February 26) HLAA filed a comment in the FCC proceeding on misuse of IP CTS.
(March 12) HLAA filed a reply to comments in the FCC proceeding on misuse of IP CTS. http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022130198
(March 25) NAD filed a comment in the FCC proceeding on rates for interstate calling services in prisons.
(March 29) TDI filed a letter to the FCC clarifying its position on its sign-on to the petition by TelePacific et al, requesting to refresh the record and take action to update copper requirement rules to promote affordable broadband over copper. http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022136097
(April 4) TDI, DHHCAN, NAD, and ALDA met with the FCC with officials of the Office of the FCC Chairman, and Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau to discuss the FCC's most recent plans for its upcoming Order and a NPRM for VRS reform.
(April 10) TDI, DHHCAN, NAD, and ALDA met with the legal advisors of the Offices of Commissioners Clyburn, Pai and Rosenworcel on the FCC's VRS reform plans in areas of interoperability, outreach and marketing, research and development, and the membership and role of iTRS Advisory Council.
(April 24) TDI, DHHCAN, HLAA, ALDA, and Gallaudet TAP met with officials of Consumer and Governmental Affairs, and Wireline Competition Bureaus on IP-CTS issues. Gallaudet TAP gave a presentation on its findings and conclusions from its IP-CTS survey, which received participation from 3,000 individuals. TDI, HLAA, and ALDA
then addressed the default-off captions setting issue, which has attracted over 2,000 complaints from consumers across the nation. We asked the FCC to consider rescinding its original decision on the default-off captions setting issue.


(March 26) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO filed comments on twenty one petitions from program producers to exempt their programming from the FCC’s closed captioning rules.


(December 20) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, HLAA, CCASDHH, CPADO, and Gallaudet TAP submitted a report regarding initial compliance with the FCC’s IP closed captioning rules. The report specifically analyzed compliance by a number of video programming owners and distributors with the FCC’s CVAA rules that prerecorded, unedited video programming delivered using IP be provided with closed captions.


(December 14) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CCASDHH, and CPADO submitted a supplemental response to the reply of Riverbend Church to their opposition to Riverbend’s original petition to the FCC to exempt its program from its closed captioning rules.


(December 13) TDI, NAD, ALDA, HLAA, DHHCAN, and CPADO submitted a supplement (specifically on uncaptioned video clips) to the previous petition for reconsideration of the FCC’s Report and Order on Closed Captioning of Internet Protocol-Delivered Video Programming, as a part of implementing the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010.


(January 14) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO filed comments on several petitions from program producers to exempt their programming from the FCC’s closed captioning rules.

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Leon Charney Media Foundation, Inc.

The other responses were filed as a single filing where we opposed 11 exemption requests.


(April 1) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO filed five oppositions to petitions for exemption from the TV closed captioning rules.


(April 1) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO filed an opposition to R.C. Boyd Enterprises’ petition for exemption from the TV closed captioning rules.


(April 17) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CCASDHH, and CPADO filed a response with the FCC to Amazon’s February 14, 2013 letter to the FCC that addressed our December 20, 2012 informal complaint alleging violations of the Commission’s Internet Protocol (“IP”) closed captioning rules.


EMERGENCY ACCESS:

(November 29 & December 3) TDI, HLAA, and NAD met with the legal advisors from Offices of Commissioner Pai, and then joined by Gallaudet TAP, with those of Offices of Chairman Genachowski and Commissioner Clyburn on the FCC’s tentative plans for the Report and Order, and Further Notice on Proposed Rulemaking for 9-1-1 emergency services via text messaging.


(December 4) TDI, HLAA, and Gallaudet TAP met with the legal advisors from Offices of Commissioners Rosenworcel and McDowell on the FCC’s tentative plans for the Report and Order, and Further Notice on Proposed Rulemaking for 9-1-1 emergency services via text messaging.


(December 6) TDI issued an eNote inviting our members and the general public to participate in an emergency communications survey by the Georgia Tech Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center.


(December 13) TDI, NAD, ALDA, CCASDHH, HLAA, DHHCAN, CPADO and Gallaudet TAP filed comments to the FCC on legal and regulatory framework for development of NG9-1-1 services and the transition from legacy 9-1-1 networks to NG9-1-1.


(January 7) TDI, AADB, NAD, DHHCAN, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, RERC-TA filed reply comments in a rulemaking related to accessible emergency information delivered via IP.


(January 17) TDI, TAP/RERC-TA, AADB, and DHHCAN met with the FCC Media Bureau and CGB to discuss accessible emergency information for deaf-blind people.


(January 29) TDI, NAD, ALDA, HLAA, DHHCAN, CPADO, CCADHH, TAP filed a comment in response to questions developing protocols for automated error messages for failed text-to-911 attempts.


(February 5) Jim House gave a testimony on emergency preparedness at the Joint U.S. House and Senate Joint Seminar on Emergency Planning for Individuals with Access and Functional Needs. The title of Jim’s presentation was “Information is Power Survival”.

(February 13) TDI, TAP, ALDA, HLAA, NAD met with the FCC Media Bureau and CGB to discuss several captioning and emergency access issues.


(February 25) TDI, TAP met with Commissioner McDowell’s office to discuss several captioning and emergency access issues.

(February 25) TDI, TAP met with Commissioner McDowell’s office to discuss several captioning and emergency access issues.
implementing the interim text-to-9-1-1 solution recommended by consumers and endorsed by industry. This proceeding addressed the Commission’s requirement for bounce-back error messages for text users attempting to summon for help regardless of where in America they are, and in such situations where the most appropriate 9-1-1 centers are not in position to respond back via text messaging to the calling parties. http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022250988

(April 12) TDI, DHHCAN, NAD, ALDA, CPADO, AADB, CCASDHH, and Gallaudet TAP sent a joint letter of support to the FCC encouraging the Commission to take action on the request of Progeny LMS, LLC for authority to offer position location services to improve the effectiveness of 9-1-1 location accuracy.

OTHER ADVOCACY

(December 5) Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network had its regular meeting at Gallaudet. Karen Peltz-Strauss and Greg Hlibok provided an overview of the FCC’s activities and progress with the CVAA.

(December 13) We had our annual TDI Holiday Party in downtown Washington, D.C. 150 people attended the party, and FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn honored us with her presence.

(December 20) AT&T disseminated a press release announcing establishment of its Corporate Accessibility Technology Office, and Stout was quoted in the release commending AT&T for this new initiative, and encouraging other Fortune 500 companies to follow AT&T’s example.

(December 21) TDI issued an eNote to inform that the FCC has revised its 2000C complaint form to include IP captioning.

(December 24) Another eNote was sent out to thank sponsors from industry, government, and academia for the 2012 TDI Holiday Party, which was held on December 13 in downtown Washington, D.C.

(January 3) Stout took part in a meeting with Google’s Erica Swanson and Adrienne Biddings in downtown Washington, D.C. We discussed progress with Google on some accessible products and services, like its Hangouts+ video communication software, and auto captioning tool for the with the YouTube videos.

(February 27) Stout sent an email to Dr. Gerrie Hawkins, Senior Policy Analyst, National Council on Disability (NCD). Dr. Hawkins asked Stout to answer a number of questions for its annual progress report on national disability policy. Stout asked NCD to focus extensively on employment and education issues of people with disabilities, particularly those of individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

(April 4) TDI signed on to the letter from Common Cause to the White House asking that it nominates a new Chairman and a new Commissioner, FCC, who would be deeply committed to protecting the public interest by increasing competition, improving political transparency, promoting media diversity and accessibility, and ensuring an open Internet.

(April 15) Jim House submitted a
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piece titled, “Promoting Functional Equivalency” on formation of TDI and its role today for telecommunications access for a new publication, The Deaf Studies Encyclopedia. Dr. Genie Gertz and Dr. Patrick Boudreault serve as General Editors. The project is produced by Golson Media, and Sage Reference will then publish the work.

(April 15) An article, “The Rise of Internet Captioning” written by Jim House, Director of Public Relations, TDI, was published in the March – April, 2013 issue of the Volta Voices magazine with Alexander Graham Bell Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

(April 22) TDI signed on to a letter from NAD to Shaun Donovan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requesting that HUD discontinue its current policies, regulations that create arbitrary maximum quotas, and cease denying preferences to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing that need accessibility features of a unit and wish to live in that unit. This came about as Apache ASL Trails in Tempe, AZ, a housing complex for deaf and hard of hearing senior citizens in Tempe, AZ, is facing possible violations of HUD regulations. http://www.nad.org/nad-writes-letter-housing-and-urban-development

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