

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN MIGNON CLYBURN**

Re: *Commemorating the 23rd Anniversary of the ADA with Implementation of the CVAA*

Next Friday, July 26th, is the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act – the landmark legislation that has transformed the lives of our family, friends, and neighbors with disabilities. For more than 50 million Americans, the ADA has opened the doors of opportunity to education, employment, and entertainment, as well as communication, community, civic action, and access. This law impacts all of us, by better enabling our relatives and colleagues with disabilities to more fully participate in a non-discriminatory way.

Today, in commemoration, we focus on what could be called the “sister” to the ADA – the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. The FCC has been moving aggressively to implement the CVAA, enacted right after the 20th anniversary of the ADA, and I am proud to report that the Commission has hit every single key deadline set by the Act.

Many wonderful things can be said about the CVAA, but perhaps most important to me, is that this is a forward thinking law. Rather than view the accessibility needs of people with disabilities as an afterthought in the design of new products and services, this law makes sure that these obligations are considered from the *very beginning* of design. Building tomorrow’s devices for all – not just some – is not only the law, it’s the right thing to do. Thanks to the CVAA, people with disabilities now have more access to telephones, television, the Internet, and new applications and services. High-speed Internet and mobile technologies offer an unprecedented opportunity to enhance the independence, productivity, and overall quality of life for all of us, including people with disabilities – but only if they are accessible. And the CVAA is making this happen. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the champions of this legislation in Congress, Senator Mark Pryor and Senator Ed Markey, for making this law a reality.

When Congress passed the baton to us to implement the CVAA, we ran with it. We met some very tight deadlines over the past three years, and these were only possible through the perseverance and commitment of an incredible staff in virtually every bureau and office in the Commission. I wish to thank the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, the Media Bureau, the Wireless Bureau, the Office of General Counsel, the Enforcement Bureau and others for your leadership and guidance.

I want to express my deep appreciation for the enthusiasm and participation of those who played a role in making sure that we stayed on our toes, in getting done what needed to be done. And my gratitude extends to those Commissioners, past and present, for helping to advance this most important of causes.

And finally, these expressions would not be complete if I failed to acknowledge Karen Peltz Strauss, one of government’s greatest champions. Her watchful eye, and listening ear, continue

to augment the lives of millions of Americans who will forever benefit from her amazing talents. Thank you Karen, and to all of those hard-working individuals who have carried the baton on these issues.

- Because of the work that Commission staff has done, 36 million Americans who are deaf or have hearing loss, can watch television programs with closed captions, when those programs are re-shown over the Internet; and use their cell phones, tablets and other portable wireless devices, to watch these programs with captions.
- 25 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired, can enjoy TV programs with video description; and will, over the next few years, be able to navigate a TV menu, send an email or instant message on a smart phone, and have access to emergency information on TV.
- Thousands of people who are deaf-blind can receive accessible communication devices so they can make telephone calls and access the Internet, to work, learn, and shop, like everyone else.
- And because of the Commission's work, Americans with disabilities are able to locate accessible communication products and services through the Commission's new accessibility clearinghouse.

The CVAA has given us a unique opportunity to harness the power of new wireless, digital, and broadband technologies and improve the lives of people with disabilities. As long as I am able to serve, promoting greater accessibility in communications for people with disabilities will remain a top policy priority.

So many people have been a part of this movement, including my colleagues here on the bench, numerous outside parties, and our friends in the consumer electronics, communication services, and video programming industries. But in particular, I'd like to acknowledge four outstanding advocates who are here with us today: Claude Stout of Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Andrew Phillips of the National Association of the Deaf, Mark Richert of the American Foundation for the Blind, and Al Sonnenstrahl, a longstanding champion of telecommunications access. They have helped move the ball down the field on these and so many other issues, and I am eternally grateful for their passion and efforts.

I am equally thankful for the hardworking staff here at the FCC, whose names are now displayed on the monitors, who have worked tirelessly to turn thought into action, and they collectively occupy a special place in my heart. They embody the very best part of public service, and the belief that the American government truly works *for* the people. I commend them, and I feel so lucky to be associated with them.