

HLAA is working for you: Public Policy and Advocacy

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<http://hlaaadvocacy.blogspot.com/>

On Friday, February 19, 2010, HLAA along with other consumer and industry representatives attended a meeting of the Digital Closed Captioning & Video Description Technical Working Group. This Working Group is hosted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to tackle the problems consumers have seen with closed captioning in a DTV world.

It has become apparent that some of the problems with captioning on DTV's are complex and difficult to track down and solve, some are not so difficult but need the industry to devote resources to address, and others need input from the FCC to ensure the problems are solved. It was good to hear that the folks at the FCC are determined to make headway to solve these difficult problems.

It appears that one issue is that we don't have enough data to know what all the problems are. One way to address that is for consumers to send in more complaints. Well, it just got easier to complain!

At the Feb 19th meeting, the FCC announced that the rules that had been adopted by the FCC for filing of captioning complaints back in November, 2009, are now in effect. We believe these new rules will help consumers get their captioning problems solved much more quickly than the old rules and allow the FCC and industry to better understand the kind of problems we are seeing and where we are seeing those problems.

Under the new rules:

1. You can contact the program distributor directly. The program distributor is the broadcaster, the cable company, the satellite company or whoever is sending you the television signal. The new rules say that a contact person must be available during hours of operation for broadcasters, cable companies and satellite companies so that you can call or email a real person, and, with any luck, get your problem solved very quickly. This has the potential to be very good for complaints where there is a quick fix, like captions suddenly disappearing during a program. Your program distributor's contact information should be made available on the company's bill or on their website very soon, if it is not there already. After March 22, you can also find the contact information on the FCC's website.
2. You can contact the FCC. The new rules say you can bring your complaint to the attention of the FCC first. The FCC will then send your complaint to the program distributor. Also, you can contact the FCC even after you contacted the program distributor directly, if that problem was not solved. This will be helpful because the FCC will be able to see the kinds of complaints that are coming in, and might even be able to start seeing patterns in our complaints.
3. The rules say you must send in a complaint within 60 days of the captioning problem. And the program distributor will have 30 days to respond after they received the complaint from you or the FCC.
4. You can file your written complaint with the FCC by using the on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm?sid=&id=d1e3. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to: Federal Communications Commission Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division 445 12th Street, S.W. Washington, DC 20554

For more information about closed captioning and the complaint process, visit the FCC's website at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html>

**So, do send your complaints to the FCC.
I for one, look forward to the time when we have no complaints to send in!**