



This Week in Bethesda

DECEMBER 16, 2016

This is a weekly report from the HLAA national office in Bethesda, Maryland. Please also [sign up](#) for the online HLAA e-News where even more news is published.

The HLAA national office will be closed the week between Christmas and New Year's. The office will re-open on January 3, 2017. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday. And remember, if you find yourself in the company of (loud) family and friends – as many will – make sure you remind them how best to communicate with you!

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year brought some exciting news for people with hearing loss. On June 2, 2016, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine published the long-awaited [report Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability](#). HLAA was one of the study sponsors and the report provided evidence to what we already know – that hearing loss is a major health concern and can be prevented (in some cases), screened for, and treated early. We also know one barrier to care is the cost of hearing aids. HLAA is working, either on our own or with the other sponsors and stakeholders, to make hearing health care more affordable and accessible. There have also been several other developments for people with hearing loss in 2016 and HLAA is involved in most of them. For a recap of 2016, please read [The Year in Review](#) in the November/December issue of *Hearing Loss Magazine*.

Thank you to many of you who are working on behalf of people with hearing loss in HLAA chapters and state organizations, through participation in the Walk4Hearing, as a hearing health care professional, or by being members or supporters of HLAA. We are all in this together, part of one organization we call the Hearing Loss Association of America. On behalf of the HLAA staff and Board of Trustees, we wish all of you a happy and peaceful holiday season.

Sincerely,
Barbara Kelley

NAS REPORT UPDATE

This is an update on the activities and efforts related to the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) [report, Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability](#).

HLAA Supports New Senate Bill, "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2016"

On December 1, 2016, [Senate Bill S.9](#) was introduced by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) for the regulation of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids. The "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2016" would make certain types of hearing aids available over the counter and remove many of the barriers for consumers who could benefit from hearing aids. HLAA is a supporter of the bill, along with AARP, the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), Bose Corporation, and the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). [Read more](#).



FDA Takes Important Step to Support Consumer Access to Hearing Aids

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [announced](#) that they do not intend to enforce the requirement that individuals 18 and older receive a medical evaluation or sign a waiver prior to purchasing most hearing aids. The announcement is in direct response to Recommendation 3 in the NAS report to "Remove the [FDA's] regulation for medical evaluation or waiver." [Read more.](#)

2017 HLAA AWARDS

Deadline TODAY – December 16!

HLAA will honor outstanding individuals, HLAA Chapters and State Organizations, companies, and organizations at the HLAA2017 Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Friday evening, June 23, at the *HLAA Stars Come Out Awards Ceremony and Talent Show*, sponsored by CapTel Captioned Telephone. You can find more information and instructions for submitting an award in the [Award Nomination Package](#), but you must act quickly – the deadline is **TODAY!**

ADVOCACY

FCC Adopts Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Regarding Real-Time Text

Executive Director Barbara Kelley and Director of Public Policy Lise Hamlin attended the final Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Open Commission Meeting of 2016 on December 15. HLAA members Veronica Davila Steele, who heads up the new Prince George's County Chapter, Russell Misheloff, leader of the Washington, DC Chapter, and Barry Kasinitz from the Montgomery County (Maryland) Chapter, were in attendance as well.

The room was packed full of consumers with hearing loss and representatives from Gallaudet University, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI), Communication Service for the Deaf, the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons, and the Trace Center at the University of Maryland. We were all there to witness the Commission's actions on the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the transition from TTY to real-time text (RTT) technology. The Commission did not disappoint: they adopted the item unanimously.

RTT is text that is transmitted instantly with recipients being able to see it on a phone as it is typed, enabling dialogue similar to voice conversations. It also provides the ability to have text flow while the user speaks. This gives immediate telecom accessibility benefits to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability. It also offers benefits to mainstream telecommunications in situations where people are temporarily unable to hear well (such as noisy environments) or use their voice, or cannot engage in an audio conversation due to safety or privacy reasons. These benefits enable communication exchanges that are more fluid and conversational than turn-based texting.



It should be noted that this item would not have moved ahead without strong support from consumer groups and endless hours devoted to it by Gallaudet's Dr. Christian Vogler, the Trace Center's Greg Vanderheiden, and TDI's counsel, Drew Simshaw. The other half of the equation was the willingness of AT&T and others in the telecommunications industry to chart a path forward toward new accessible technologies and away from antiquated TTY technology.

The FCC has opened the door to allowing an alternative to TTY technology. As FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn said in some remarks aimed at the telecommunication industry, "Continue to work with consumer groups to ensure that the needs of the communities they represent are met by implementing features and capabilities that support successful deployment and broad adoption of real-time text. This is your chance to show us that you, that the market, can successfully address these issues without a mandate from us to do so."

Thanks are owed to the FCC and the Commission's staff who worked endless hours writing and rewriting this item.

See the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the [FCC website](#). We will be posting further information on the HLAA website and in our *e-News*, which will be published next week.

Chairman Tom Wheeler to Leave FCC

Also on December 15, Chairman Tom Wheeler announced his intention to leave the FCC on January 20, 2017. Chairman Wheeler has been an unflinching champion of disability access since he took the helm at the FCC more than three years ago. The website *Law 360* reports, "While his controversial positions often found him at odds with other policymakers and industry groups, experts agreed that his time at the helm will be remembered for its effectiveness."

We salute Chairman Wheeler and his achievements, and wish him well in his future endeavors.

HLAA2017 CONVENTION

Research Symposium Presenters Posted

We have a great lineup of presenters for the Research Symposium, *Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants: Merging Technologies, Expanding Benefits* at the Convention in Salt Lake City. You won't want to miss it. Learn a little bit about our speakers and their presentations [here](#).

'Tis the Season to Give

Still looking for the perfect gift to give someone? The search ends here! Get your loved one a prepaid [registration](#) to the HLAA2017 Convention!



PARTNERSHIPS

ACI Alliance and HLAA Partner to Improve Cochlear Implant (CI) Awareness

While the [American Cochlear Implant \(ACI\) Alliance](#) and Hearing Loss Association of America have memberships that are quite different, our organizational missions are mutually supportive. HLAA is a consumer organization that strives to improve the lives of people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy. ACI Alliance works to improve access to cochlear implantation through research, advocacy and awareness. We work together in several general hearing loss coalitions in the field and we are now partnering on a program to expand awareness about CI candidacy and outcomes for adults. [Read more.](#)

SURVEY RESPONDENTS NEEDED

Share Your Experiences in Health Care Environments

Researchers from Duke University and the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston are conducting a [brief survey](#) to find out how hearing loss affects communication with people you interact with during your health care visits. It should take no more than 10 minutes of your time and results will be kept confidential - no information will be collected that can identify who is responding. They would very much appreciate your assistance. Your answers will help researchers design and test the most appropriate strategies for improving hearing health care for adults.

[Take the survey.](#)

If you would like to get additional information or need technical assistance, please contact Erika Juhlin at: erika.juhlin@dm.duke.edu.

DEVELOPMENT

Please Consider HLAA in Your End-of-Year Giving

HLAA, like many nonprofit organizations, holds a year-end appeal. The money raised from the appeal goes toward funding the work you have come to depend on from HLAA. All donations, no matter how small or large, make a difference. We truly appreciate all of you who have supported HLAA over the years with both your time and money. You might have received a letter in the mail about our year-end appeal or [you can read it here and donate online](#). Thank you!

