



Kathy Davis, President

121 Deer Lake Circle
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
386-677-68861-888-282-5972
president@nfbflorida.org

www.nfbflorida.org

Establishment of an Audible Universal Information Access Service for Florida's blind and print-disabled citizens

INITIATIVE

To establish an Audible Universal Information Access Service for Florida's blind and print-disabled citizens; to authorize the Public Service Commission to contract for the administration and operation of such system and to provide for the use of a portion of the TDD Relay Service monthly maintenance surcharge to be used to fund such a system.

PURPOSE

To provide a service that would allow blind and print-disabled Floridians to stay up-to-date on global, national and local news stories and events.

BENEFITS

Being informed and up-to-date on global, national and local news allows blind and print-disabled individuals to compete in the job market and classroom, become informed residents and voters; gain and for the newly blind and print-disabled regain independence and self-respect..

NEED

Florida has the largest number of blind residents in the nation, a number that increases as more senior citizens, the fastest growing blind demographic, retire and migrate to the Sunshine State. In fact, there are over 39,000 blind and print-disabled residents who are customers of the Florida Braille and Talking Book Library, all of whom are eligible and would greatly benefit from an Audible Universal Information Access Service.

REQUESTED ACTION

NFB-NEWSLINE is the most effective, efficient and accessible Audible Universal Information Access Service available. This service allows blind and print-disabled Floridians to access more than 250 global, national and local newspapers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the telephone at no charge. These eligible Florida residents can also use this free service to access TV Channel listings, which include cable, satellite and local listings.

Funding Threat: Currently funding for the NFB-NEWSLINE program in Florida is threatened due to the economic crisis and budget cuts. This would leave over 9,000 blind and print-disabled residents who currently use the program without a comparable source to get in-depth global, national and local news coverage that only newspapers can provide.

Relevance: Audible Universal Information Access Services have been established and funded with a portion of the TDD Relay Service monthly maintenance surcharge in approximately 15 other states including Alabama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Texas.

Action: We are asking for legislators who realize just how important this program is to a large portion of Florida's population to cosponsor an amendment to the Florida Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991, 91-111 chapter 427. This amendment would allow for one quarter of a cent of the current surcharge that funds the TDD relay system to be used to fund an Audible Universal Information Access Service, such as NFB-NEWSLINE, thus providing a valuable and much needed service to Floridians in a time filled with program cuts without raising taxes.

Testimonials from NFB-NEWSLINE Users:

“As a snow-bird, NEWSLINE delivers my daily paper to my nearest telephone, hether I’m in New York or Florida.”

– ***Bob Lassone, Daytona Beach***

“Personally, I love the TV listings. It saves a lot of time flipping through channels. The set up is very easy to do and the service prompts you through all else. Also, the fact that you can save your favorite channels is great.”

– ***Wendy Wilson, DeLand***

“Macular degeneration took the newspaper away from me, but NFB-NEWSLINE has brought it back.”

– ***Sydney Katz, Sunrise***

“I love NEWSLINE. It's great! I can follow my favorite football team. I am a big fan of the Philadelphia Eagles and living in Jacksonville, I don't get much news about them, but with NEWSLINE, I can read both the Philadelphia *Daily News* and the Philadelphia *Inquirer* for the sports. I get news about the team from a local perspective. I also can read my local paper the Florida *Times-Union* and get news about my side of town, the city, and the North East Florida area. For me, NEWSLINE has opened a new world to access, news, sports and entertainment.”

– ***Joe Minichiello, Jacksonville***

**Proposed Amendment of Florida's
Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991**

To amend Part 1 of 427.704 of Florida's Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991 relating to the telephone system for the physically impaired, so as to provide for the establishment of a state-wide telecommunication system capable of providing audible universal information access services to blind and print-disabled citizens; to authorize the Public Service Commission to contract for the administration and operation of such system; to provide for the use of a one quarter of a cent of the current monthly maintenance surcharge to be used to fund such system

For more information on this matter or other issues affecting the blind of Florida, , please feel free to contact:

Elizabeth (Betty) McNally
Legislative Chairperson
National Federation of the Blind of Florida
1960 NE 185 Terrace
North Miami Beach, FL 33179
305-935-4338
bethmac@bellsouth.net
www.nfbflorida.org