



Disability
Rights
Oregon

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Funding to improve American Sign Language and captioning of state legislative process passes

Legislative victory for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities and democracy

Portland, Oregon—Today, Oregon’s leading statewide disability rights organization applauded the legislature’s passage of \$1.17 million in funding to improve American Sign Language (ASL) and captioning of the legislature’s audio and video service—removing a barrier to participation in the democratic process for members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community. Disability Rights Oregon advocated to include the funding in HB 5016, the budget bill for the legislature.

The Oregon Legislature Audio and Video service allows individuals to watch legislative hearings and other events on their computer or other streaming device and to watch these events from hallways, overflow rooms and the Lobby Message Center in the Capitol. Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing had been excluded from using this valuable service.

“Of the people, by the people, for the people’ means *a//* of the people. The heart of Oregon’s democracy is opening its doors to members of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities and will be stronger for it,” said Jake Cornett, Executive Director of Disability Rights Oregon. “We owe a debt of gratitude to Senate President Courtney and House Speaker Kotek for their leadership in ensuring all Oregonians can access the legislative process.”

Every Oregonian should have the opportunity to participate in our democracy. Individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing can't participate equally in the legislative process if they don't have equal access to this branch of our state government.

“I have experienced first-hand the barriers in meeting with representatives and participating in the hearing. Sometimes accommodations weren't provided for hearings. There are so many issues that the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community need to advocate for, but have instead had to focus on advocating for access to the legislative process,” said Chad Ludwig, Executive Director of Bridges Oregon. **“This legislation will remove barriers that have stood in the way for years and allow members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing to meet with their representatives about issues that matter to their lives.”**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits disability discrimination by state and local government regardless of whether the government entity receives federal funding. Under Title II, publicly available videos, whether for entertainment or informational use, must be made accessible to individuals with disabilities. That means including captions on videos both in person and online so that Deaf and Hard of Hearing people can access public services.

Broadcasters, cable companies, and satellite television service providers must provide closed captioning for 100 percent of all new, non-exempt, English language video programming.

About Disability Rights Oregon

Disability Rights Oregon upholds the civil rights of people with disabilities to live, work, and engage in the community. The nonprofit works to transform systems, policies, and practices to give more people the opportunity to reach their full potential. For more than 40 years, the organization has served as Oregon's Protection & Advocacy system.

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