

Kris Monteith
Acting Bureau Chief
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply to the Coalition of E-Reader Manufacturers' Petition for Waiver from CVAA
Accessibility Requirements, CG Docket No. 10-213

Dear Ms. Monteith:

I strongly oppose the Petition for Waiver submitted by the Coalition of E-Reader Manufacturers, requesting that e-readers be exempt from the Twenty First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) for the following reasons:

1. The spirit of the CVAA is to increase the accessibility of mobile advanced communications services (ACS) and e-readers have ACS functionality. Most e-reader users I know post to Facebook and exchange books with friends. It would not make sense to grant a waiver for a class of products that are clearly intended to be covered by the CVAA.
2. The Coalition claims that the primary purpose of e-readers is reading, not ACS, and yet I believe that the ACS found in e-readers is part of the intended purpose. The ability to connect with friends, share content, and access the internet are the very features that set e-readers apart from print books. ACS facilitates the reading experience and is, therefore, a co-primary purpose of e-readers.
3. E-readers can easily be made accessible. All digital content can be made accessible to a blind person if the content is programmed to be read audibly, audio output like speakers or a phone jack are added, and accessibility is considered during the design phase. The Coalition's claim that to make e-readers accessible would require a fundamental overhaul of the equipment is false.
4. I want access to digital books. Since the first e-reader came out in 2006, I have felt like a second class citizen missing out on all of the innovative benefits of digital books. If I want to read a Kindle book, I have to buy a very-expensive Apple iPad. Then I can download the free Kindle app, but that application is not fully accessible. I want to be a mainstream user and would happily buy an e-reader if one was accessible, but the manufacturers continue to exclude me from their customer pool. I reject the Coalition's notion that to make their product accessible would not provide me with any substantial benefits. In reality, it will give me options as a consumer and equal access as my sighted peers.
5. The Department of Justice and the Department of Education prohibit K-12 school districts and institutions of higher education from using inaccessible e-readers, yet the Coalition continues to knowingly sell inaccessible equipment to schools. The CVAA is consistent with preexisting legal requirements, and the FCC should not give the Coalition incentive to continue resisting accessibility.
6. The Coalition suggests that the waiver only apply to e-readers that do not have ACS capabilities, but then says that the products may have browsers and social media. This is not a meaningful limitation. The CVAA requires that ACS be accessible, and the FCC should not allow some services to be more important and others worthy of a waiver.
7. The Coalition fails to provide any details on the lifecycle of its products or a potential time frame for the waiver. An indefinite, blanket waiver would harm the public, is inconsistent with the CVAA, and should not be granted in the face of these omissions.

I strongly urge the FCC to reject the Coalition's petition and uphold the spirit of the CVAA. E-readers and the ACS features found in that equipment must be made accessible and granting a waiver would perpetuate the digital divide and discrimination in the marketplace that I face every day.

Sincerely,

MariLyn Piepho
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