Comments on Proceeding 11-154

Please note that I have answered all four points, and that my responses are in black.

The issues in the Second FNPRM include the following:

1. Whether third party distributors should be responsible for posting clips with captions on their websites and apps,

My response: Third party distributors should be responsible for posting clips with captions because this is how news and important information is distributed. I have a master's degree in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin. In the course of writing a disability newsletter, I have encountered a great deal of news content from secondary sources. Not everyone follows through to the primary source in this age of rapid data exchange and so individuals with hearing loss or deafness such as myself would likely pursue different content and never learn about the news we initially sought to engage.

If accountability for captioning is allowed loopholes, then people will opt not to be accountable. With foresight, fewer problems will exist in the future and the fact that this consideration has been brought up is indication that someone had the foresight to know that third party distributed clips would continue to be a problem. In the future, this could reduce lawsuits relating to lack of access and save the government much-needed funds. Strong captioning campaigns would should make it easy for everyone to learn about the necessity of having captions and how to go about getting them. When I ask organizations or individuals to provide captions for their online content, they almost always ask how to go about doing that, so specifying that it is needed is one-half of the problem.

2. Whether the delays for captioning live and near-live clips should be decreased or eliminated,

My response: I think there needs to be a distinction here. Delays for weather and late-breaking emergency news should not be tolerated. It's too important that individuals know if they are in danger from hurricanes, tornados, violent weather storms, forest fires, or if they are in proximity to a dangerous situation, such as that which could occur with widespread violence. This is easy to gauge when content should be required to have a system in place for emergency captioning: if people could lose their lives potentially, then the content ought not to have a delay.

I don't see how anyone could in good conscience try to argue against that. I have encountered lack of access to weather news more than any other, because weather is often late-breaking, and also have found that weather patterns I consider potentially dangerous, such as a recent electrical storm in my area, have not been shared with me via captioning. I'd love to see the defense for such a violation of one's safety. I also came across a college shooting incident that needed captioning.

Now, someone is sure to say that this is reasonable, except for the expense for or perhaps the availability of captioning. And they would be right.

It is time to consider seriously and conscientiously that live captioning apps and programs should be funded and researched to reduce the financial burden of producing live captions via a person. Because the people who caption are highly trained and expensive, and because there are not enough individuals to do the job. And yes, if such apps and programs are produced, some captioning businesses might go out of business.

However, this is an ethical decision: more people will benefit from access to apps and programs that can conduct live captioning sans people. Such apps and programs would reduce government oversight and intervention when captioning isn't provided and people lose their lives or are endangered as a consequence. Less oversight means less expense. Also, such changes would not be immediate and companies providing these services would be needed for some time to come and the process of complete conversion from live captioning to automated captioning would allow everyone to plan ahead for employment opportunities.

Without foresight right now, though, we could lose years of access to what should be one of the simplest of human endeavors: communication.

I think the matter desperately needs addressing, because with greater support and funding, I am certain that reliably and even outstanding apps and programs would exist today if it were not for the fact that those of us closest to the human captioners realize that it would usher in a new age and they would eventually not be needed to do this work to the same extent. However, human captioners will still be needed because when someone says, "Look at this," for example, a computer would not be able to look at the item and type, "Look at this [the Control key on the keyboard]." It is important for this to be addressed with news as well. Sometimes "this" and "that" are said and by the time the individual is reading the language, the pronoun's physical reference is gone.

> 3. Whether “mash-ups” clips should be covered (“mash-up” clips are clips that combine captioned TV programming with some uncaptioned Internet programming), and

My response: Yes, here again is the loophole being created if this is not addressed. Why consider such a blatant loophole when with foresight, one can easily tell that this will lead to a lack of access? Close the loophole now and save government dollars that would be used to address this in the future. Again, also is the consideration that the mash up clip the individual receives may be the primary source an individual receives in a time of rapid communications. Therefore, if he or she encounters a block to access, the individual would be more likely to not pursue the content and look for another story, therefore losing access to news that could dramatically impact his or her life. Sometimes, we consider only emergency content as that which has immediate impact, but things such as not learning about a free fan program or public housing could lead to future emergencies. Some mash-ups provide a combination of resources essential to daily living, which is, after all, one of the great things about communications and the news.

> 4. Whether the new rules should cover “advance” video clips. “Advance” video clips are those that are put online after the applicable compliance deadline but before the video programming is shown on television with captions, and which then remain online after the captioned programming was shown on television.

My response: I am proud that someone has foreseen all of these loopholes, for this would be yet another one. It is easier to be clear than vague and would lead to greater compliance. Therefore, if the programming has the intent of being captioned for TV, then it should post its content with captions online, regardless of whether it appears before or after the TV appearance. This is so simple to determine, because companies that think this is a burden can alleviate that burden by posting TV and online content the same day or thereabouts. They are not required to place a burden on themselves and if they did, it would be their own doing!

This is one of the FCC's greatest moments of serving its country, because individuals who have historically been excluded from so many aspects of daily living now find the FCC doing what good government does-makes society a better place for its citizens. The work being done with captioning and for that matter with descriptive voice services will impact millions and future generations.

I have but one complaint and that is that there needs to be greater access to the FCC's work and rulings. It is not easy to access this information, and if I did not write a disability newsletter, I would never have come across this news about the rulings, or have provided this input; I don't want people to lose the opportunity to know the good work you are doing and to help the FCC have vision and foresight and troubleshoot so that we can all work this out together. Thank you for this opportunity to share my views. Please share this more often with of course the Deaf community outlets, but also with mainstream outlets for individuals who are late or newly deafened, or for new parents of children with hearing loss or deafness. Otherwise, there is no network to inform them.

--

Christina Goebel
Individual who is legally deaf and views all television content with captions (when available) and
Project Specialist, Education and Outreach, and Conference Coordinator
Texas State Independent Living Council
4319 James Casey Street, Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78745
512-371-7353, Extension 6 (office)
cgoebel@txsilc.org
(My personal contact information was included in the application.)