

Hello,

I am writing because I wanted to suggest something for your deaf (and blind/visually impaired) students and parents for when school starts again. As you may have heard, the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act was introduced in Congress on June 26, 2009.

This Act, among other things, will require captioning on the Internet, and video description on the Internet for the blind and visually impaired. We need help to get this bill passed because it is not easy to get a bill through Congress!

Here is what I suggest: perhaps as a writing assignment, you could have your students write letters to their parents' Congressional representatives. Use <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml> to contact Representatives. We also need a similar bill introduced in the Senate, so use http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm to contact Senators. Representatives should be asked to cosponsor the bill, and Senators should be asked to introduce a similar bill.

In addition, because in numbers there is strength, in addition to telling your students' parents about the bill and encouraging them to write their Representatives and Senators, you can also tell your students' parents about Caption Action 2, a grassroots Facebook effort to get this bill passed. Caption Action 2 is at <http://www.causes.com/captionaction2>. We also have a blog, <http://captionaction2.blogspot.com>, where you can download a PDF of the bill and see a countdown counter showing how much time we have left. In addition, the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT, at <http://www.coataccess.org>) is working hard to get the bill passed. In fact, we only have until January 2011 to get this bill passed. After that, this bill will die.

We really need help. Most bills do not make it out of committee, and last year that is what happened to a similar bill. This year we have a second chance, and we might not get a third chance.

Thank you, in advance, for your help! This bill is really to guarantee the deaf and blind kids an accessible future on the Internet!

Jamie Berke
Leader, Caption Action 2