

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2007

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SENATE DRS55065-LU-15A (1/30)

Short Title: Accessible Electronic Info Act/Blind/Disabled. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Dorsett.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO MAINTAIN AN ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC INFORMATION  
SERVICE FOR BLIND AND DISABLED PERSONS AND TO APPROPRIATE  
FUNDS FOR THE SERVICE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 168 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a  
new Article to read:

"Article 4.

"Accessible Electronic Information Act.

**"§ 168-30. Short title and findings.**

(a) Short Title. – This article shall be known and may be cited as the 'Accessible  
Electronic Information Act'.

(b) Legislative Findings. – The General Assembly finds and declares all of the  
following:

- (1) Thousands of citizens in the State have disabilities, including blindness  
or visual impairment, that prevent them from using conventional print  
material.
- (2) The State fulfills an important responsibility by providing books and  
magazines prepared in Braille, audio, and large-type formats made  
available to blind and disabled persons.
- (3) The technology, transcription methods, and means of distribution used  
for these materials are labor-intensive and cannot support rapid  
dissemination to individuals in rural and urban areas throughout the  
State.
- (4) Lack of direct and prompt access to information included in  
newspapers, magazines, newsletters, schedules, announcements, or

1            other time-sensitive materials limits literacy, participation, and  
2            educational opportunities for blind and disabled persons.

3            (5)    This limitation can best be overcome through use of high-speed  
4            computer and telecommunications technology, combined with  
5            customized software, that provides a practical and cost-effective means  
6            to convert electronic text-based information, including daily  
7            newspapers, into synthetic speech suitable for statewide distribution  
8            with modern telecommunications technology.

9            (6)    Low-cost interstate telecommunications rates make distribution of  
10           electronic text-based information to blind and disabled persons both  
11           efficient and cost-effective for the State.

12           (7)    Federal funds have been used to develop the technology and  
13           infrastructure needed for statewide toll-free access to daily newspapers  
14           and other timely information of local, State, and national interest,  
15           providing an efficient and cost-effective means of reader registration,  
16           content acquisition, and interstate telecommunications support.

17           (8)    Use of this accessible electronic information service will enhance the  
18           State's current efforts to meet the needs of blind and disabled persons  
19           for access to information that is otherwise available in print, reducing  
20           isolation and supporting full integration and equal access for these  
21           persons.

22    **"§ 168-31. Definitions.**

23           The following definitions apply in this section:

24           (1)    Accessible electronic information service. – A service where news and  
25           other timely information, including newspapers, is provided to blind  
26           and disabled persons from a multistate service center, using high-speed  
27           computers and telecommunications technology for interstate  
28           acquisition of content and rapid distribution in a form appropriate for  
29           use by blind and disabled persons.

30           (2)    Blind and disabled persons. – Those individuals who are eligible for  
31           library loan services through the Library of Congress and the North  
32           Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped pursuant to  
33           36 C.F.R. § 701.10(b).

34           (3)    Director. – The Director of the Division of Services for the Blind in  
35           the Department of Health and Human Services.

36           (4)    Division. – The Division of Services for the Blind in the Department  
37           of Health and Human Services.

38           (5)    Qualified entity. – An agency, instrumentality, or political subdivision  
39           of the State or a nonprofit organization that:

40           a.       Provides interstate access for blind and disabled persons to read  
41           daily newspapers by producing audio editions by computer.

42           b.       Provides a means of program administration or reader  
43           registration on the Internet.

44    **"§ 168-32. Administration of service.**

1        The Division shall establish, operate, promote, and administer a statewide accessible  
2 electronic information service. The Director shall enter into an agreement with a  
3 qualified entity to provide an accessible electronic information service for blind and  
4 disabled persons. The Division shall plan for continuation of the service from year to  
5 year and maximize use of federal and other funds available by obtaining grant or in-kind  
6 support from appropriate programs and securing access to low-cost interstate rates for  
7 telecommunications by reimbursement or otherwise."

8            **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
9 Department of Health and Human Services the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars  
10 (\$75,000) for the 2007-2008 fiscal year to be used by the Division of Services for the  
11 Blind of the Department of Health and Human Services to establish an accessible  
12 electronic information service for blind and disabled persons in this State.

13            **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2007.