

# The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access

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## BACKGROUND

Access to technology and information is difficult for the **29.86 million** people living in the U.S. with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Alzheimer's and other dementias, Persistent Mental Illness, Brain Injury, Stroke, and other Cognitive Disabilities.

"The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access" is a document written to serve as a catalyst for discussions and promote solutions to solve this critical issues.

Featured in USA Today – September 2015



Tommy Can't Text

"The Internet of Everything"  
or  
"The Internet of Nothing"

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## INTRODUCTION

Authored in 2013 and unanimously passed by the Colorado State Legislature in 2014, "The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access" strives to provide a regulatory framework that provides technology inclusion for individuals with cognitive disabilities in all 50 states of the U.S.

Without a firm understanding of how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be meaningfully included in the use and advancements of information and communication technologies, we cannot hope to advance their inclusion in modern society. Technology does not simply provide convenience but instead is a necessity for full inclusion and citizenship.

The rationale for access is also well documented in Eliza Varney's article "Disability and Information Technology: A Comparative Study in Media Regulation" (2013). Dr. Varney states:

*"The regulatory approach for the ICT (Information and Technology) sector should perceive persons with disabilities not only as consumers but also as citizens with democratic expectations of effective access to information. Furthermore, the regulatory framework should be based on a clearly defined framework of principles such as equality of citizenship and the protection of human dignity (p.38)."*

## DRIVING CHANGE

### FEDERAL LEVEL

Featured as the first Overarching Technology Recommendation in the 2015 PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES REPORT; **Leveling the Playing Field: Improving Technology Access and Design for People with Intellectual Disabilities.**

### STATE LEVEL

COLORADO LEGISLATION – March, 2014 – HR 14-1011  
"Declaration of The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access"

MAINE LEGISLATION – May, 2015 – HP 969  
"Joint Resolution Concerning the Rights of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism to Technology and Information Access"

**339 Organizations & 603 Individuals have endorsed "The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access"**

## YOUR SIGNATURE MATTERS

## The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access

### Whereas

- Twenty-eight million United States citizens have cognitive disabilities such as intellectual disability; severe, persistent mental illness; brain injury; stroke; and neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease;
- People with cognitive disabilities must have access to commercially available devices and software that incorporate principles of universal design such as flexibility and ease of use for all;
- People with cognitive disabilities are entitled to inclusion in our democratic society under federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and under state and local laws;
- Technology and information access by people with cognitive disabilities must be guided by standards and best-practices, such as personalization and compatibility across devices and platforms, and through the application of innovations including automated and predictive technologies;
- The disruptive convergence of computing and communication technologies has substantially altered how people acquire, utilize, and disseminate knowledge and information;
- Security and privacy must be assured and managed to protect civil rights and personal dignity of people with cognitive disabilities;
- Access to comprehensible information and usable communication technologies is necessary for all people in our society, particularly for people with cognitive disabilities, to promote self-determination and to engage meaningfully in major aspects of life such as education, health promotion, employment, recreation, and civic participation;
- Enhanced public and private funding is urgently required to allow people with cognitive disabilities to utilize technology and access information as a natural consequence of their rights to inclusion in our society;
- Ensuring access to technology and information for the 28 million people with cognitive disabilities in the United States will create new markets and employment opportunities; decrease dependency on public services; reduce healthcare costs; and improve the independence, productivity, and quality of life of people with cognitive disabilities.
- The vast majority of people with cognitive disabilities have limited or no access to comprehensible information and usable communication technologies;

### Therefore

We hereby affirm our commitment to equal rights of people with cognitive disabilities to technology and information access and we call for implementation of these rights with deliberate speed.

View endorsers of this document and join us at: [www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration](http://www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration)

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## HOW TO SIGN

Join the social movement that calls for technology inclusion for people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

You may sign as an individual and/or as an organization. Visit:

[www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration](http://www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration)

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

**Endorse the Declaration** – Encourage friends, family and colleagues to do the same thru social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

**Start a Conversation** – Take the time to educate your immediate network (family, friends, colleagues), by sharing the information available from the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities ([www.colemaninstitute.org](http://www.colemaninstitute.org)).

**Enact State Legislation** – Using The State Legislative Toolkit from the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities, take steps to ensure that your state enacts this critical legislation. Guidance and tips to ensure success include:

**Connection & Education are Key  
Identify Champions  
Spread the word .... And Wealth  
Share the News**

**Tell and repeat stories often – reflect on how access to information and technology increases independence and quality of life.**

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### DECLARATION IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS (DIGS)

1. The Coleman institute for Cognitive Disabilities will provide grants to promote implementation of "The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access" in states and communities.
2. Grants will be awarded competitively.
3. Grants will range from \$500 to \$10,000.
4. Proposals will be reviewed by the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities and Consultants.
5. Information about the grants will be available at [www.colemaninstitute.org](http://www.colemaninstitute.org).

## SIGN HERE:

<http://www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration>