



RERC ON COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT

Thursday, January 13, 2005

Winter 2005

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

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Congress Passes the Assistive Technology Act of 2004

Editor's Note: This Press Release was obtained from the ATAP website, www.ataporg.org. You can also find a copy of the AT Act of 2004 on this site.

Millions of people with disabilities rely on assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, communication devices and adapted computers, to pursue their education, obtain and maintain a job and participate in their community and leisure activities. On October 8, 2004, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 (AT Act of 2004) (HR 4278). This positive action by the House of Representatives closely followed the Senate's unanimous support and passage of the AT Act on September 30, 2004. The bill has been sent to President Bush for signature. Passage of the AT Act of 2004 assures that people with disabilities, educators, employers, and service providers will have access to the technology they need.

Every state and US territory has an Assistive Technology Act Program (AT Program) funded under the provisions of the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988. Legislation supporting the State AT Programs was scheduled to sunset on September 30, 2004. The AT Act of 2004 supports the continuance of State AT Programs and eliminates the sunset provision for state programs.

"Passage of the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 affirms the benefits of assistive technology for people with disabilities and the importance of access to AT devices and services for increased independence and productivity. The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) is pleased that the AT Programs operating in every state and US territory will be able to continue to be a resource for people with disabilities, educators, employers and other service providers to find and access the assistive technology they need. The impressive bi-partisan effort of the Congress to ensure the continuation of these vital programs is heartening for people with disabilities and the programs that serve them." Deborah Buck, Executive Director, Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

AT Programs established under the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988, have been responsible for implementing strategies to raise awareness of assistive



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	<p>technology and resources and work with systems such as education, rehabilitation, health services, to increase access to assistive technology devices and services for people with disabilities. The AT Act of 2004 focuses on the continuation or development of specific programs that will ensure direct access to technology including, assistive technology loan programs, device demonstration programs, device reutilization programs, and alternative financing such as low-cost financial loan programs. In addition, AT Programs are responsible for implementing training and technical assistance, with a special emphasis on assistance for individuals with disabilities transitioning from school to work or continued education, conducting public awareness activities, information and referral services, and coordination and collaboration with public and private entities that are responsible for programs, services, policies or funding of assistive technology services. The AT Act of 2004 also clarifies states responsibilities to ensure access to electronic and information technology as defined under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Activities carried out under and supported with Federal funds received under the AT Act of 2004 are required to comply with the Section 508 standards.</p> <p>"Millions of people with disabilities rely on assistive technology to help them gain and maintain independence. Passage of the bipartisan Assistive Technology Act of 2004 will help individuals throughout the US and its territories get the technology they need to help them be independent in school, at home, in the workplace, and in the community. This is a great step forward in recognizing the contributions of all Americans." Marty Blair, Chair, Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs</p> <p>The AT Act of 2004 also supports state grants for protection and advocacy programs related to assistive technology and national activities such as a national public-awareness tool kit, research and development, technical assistance and training, data collection, and a national public internet site.</p> <p>Contact: Deborah Buck, Executive Director, Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) 518.439.1263 dbuck@nycap.rr.com</p> <p><i>The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP), a national, member-based organization, comprised of state Assistive Technology Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act. The mission of ATAP is to promote the collaboration of AT Programs with persons with disabilities, providers, industry, advocates, and others at the state and national level and to increase the availability and utilization of accessible information technology (IT) and assistive technology devices and services (AT) for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories. <http://www.ataporq.org></i></p>	
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