

# e-Accessibility Standards as Drivers of Innovation

## USA-EU's Standards Dialogue on e-Accessibility

*David Capozzi, U.S. Access Board*

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# Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments

- When Federal agencies develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology, they must ensure that it is accessible to Federal employees and individuals with disabilities who are members of the public seeking information or services from a Federal agency unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency

# Other Laws Affect ICT Accessibility

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

# Overview

- In 2004 standards cooperation between the U.S. and the European Union was initiated to promote and harmonize requirements for accessible information and communication technology (ICT)

# Goals

- “What is needed are clear, consensus driven, testable, and reliable accessibility requirements. In this world of global scales, it is critical that accessibility requirements be harmonized throughout the world. Product manufacturers want to build to a single set of requirements – or at least not be faced with competing world wide requirements. We should do what we can to facilitate this, because if we can make the regulatory process easier to achieve – and by that I do not mean that we need to weaken the requirements that exist today – we will enhance accessibility for people with disabilities worldwide.”

*Marc Guthrie, Access Board public member  
International Workshop on Accessibility Requirements  
Brussels, Belgium -- October 21, 2004*

# Accomplishments

- 2005: Mandate 376, “Accessibility Requirements for Public Procurement of Products and Services in the ICT Domain”
- 2006: Access Board created the Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee to review its standards and to recommend changes

# Advisory Committee



**UNITED STATES ACCESS BOARD**

# Accomplishments

- 2008: Advisory Committee report
- 2010: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking
- 2011: Second advance notice of proposed rulemaking
- 2014: European Standard EN 301 549
- 2015: Notice of proposed rulemaking



# Overview

- The EN 301 549 standard is largely based on the Access Board's 2011 ANPRM
- Next step – finalize rule and continue harmonization efforts

# Results

- Two closely harmonized standards benefit 80 million persons with disabilities in the EU and 57 million in the U.S.
- Public procurement of ICT amounts to billions of dollars per year
- Harmonized standards remove ambiguity, increase competition, and lead to better quality of accessibility features
- An international standard may be the appropriate next step for a truly international approach to e-accessibility

# Future Challenges

- Mechanisms to monitor and maintain harmonization efforts
- Coordinate the development of technical assistance materials
- Coordinate implementation strategies
- Share best practices and implementation challenges