



National Association of Theatre Owners™

May 14, 2013

NATO Testimony Summary

The ADA and Entertainment Technologies: Improving Accessibility from the Movie Screen to Your Mobile Device

- The movie theater industry wants all deaf, blind, hard-of-hearing and visually impaired patrons to feel welcome in attending our cinemas and have access to a great experience at the movies—and we are working toward that goal every day.
- NATO and its members have spent hundreds of millions of dollars and countless working hours on making movie theaters as accessible as possible to moviegoers with disabilities.
- While captioning in the film era was prohibitively costly to movie theater owners and movie studios, the industry's conversion to digital cinema has unleashed a new generation of access-enabling technologies.
- The pace of these innovations is accelerating access markedly. Over the past year, digital technology has enabled the distribution of more movies than ever with captions and descriptions, as well as the rollout of a new generation of closed captioning and descriptive video devices. America's movie theaters are voluntarily installing these systems as fast as the manufacturers can produce them.
- To spur innovation and promote greater access, NATO members have: (1) provided technical guidance, cinema testing locations, design requirements and other aid to access equipment companies; (2) organized hands-on demonstrations of prototype access equipment to representatives of the disabled community and industry participants; and (3) taken the lead public advocacy position in the movie industry to promote closed captioning and video description using newspapers, company and third-party websites, box office signage and other press materials.
- As a result of these proactive and voluntary initiatives taken by the movie theater industry, more than 18,000 (53%) of America's digital cinema screens are now enabled for closed captioning and video description.
- Neither the CINEMA Act (S.555) nor current proposed Department of Justice rulemakings reflect adequate understanding of the scale, pace or success of current voluntary efforts by the cinema industry to expand access. NATO strongly opposes such coercive government mandates as demonstrably unnecessary in light of the progress the movie industry is making on access issues. Indeed, NATO feels such heavy-handed regulation would be a threat, rather than a spur, to progress in this area.