

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 675

To provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 16, 2007

Mr. HARKIN (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. DODD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. KOHL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. SNOWE, and Ms. STABENOW) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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## A BILL

To provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### 3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Training for Realtime  
5 Writers Act of 2007”.

### 6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1           (1) As directed by Congress in section 723 of  
2           the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 613),  
3           as added by section 305 of the Telecommunications  
4           Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–104; 110 Stat. 126),  
5           the Federal Communications Commission began en-  
6           forcing rules requiring full closed captioning of most  
7           English television programming on January 1, 2006.

8           (2) The Federal Communications Commission  
9           rules also require that video programming be fully  
10          captioned in Spanish by 2010.

11          (3) More than 30,000,000 Americans are con-  
12          sidered deaf or hard of hearing, and many require  
13          captioning services to participate in mainstream ac-  
14          tivities.

15          (4) The National Institute on Deafness and  
16          other Communication Disorders estimates that 1 in  
17          3 Americans over the age of 60 has already experi-  
18          enced hearing loss. The 79,000,000 Americans who  
19          are identified as “baby boomers” represent 39 per-  
20          cent of the population of the United States and most  
21          baby boomers began to reach age 60 just in the last  
22          few years.

23          (5) Closed captioning is a continuous source of  
24          emergency information for people in mass transit  
25          and other congregate settings.

1           (6) Empirical research studies since 1988 dem-  
2           onstrate that captions improve the performance of  
3           individuals learning to read English.

4 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF GRANT PROGRAM TO PRO-**  
5 **MOTE TRAINING AND JOB PLACEMENT OF**  
6 **REALTIME WRITERS.**

7           (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce shall  
8           make competitive grants to eligible entities under sub-  
9           section (b) to promote training and placement of individ-  
10          uals, including individuals who have completed a court re-  
11          porting training program, as realtime writers in order to  
12          meet the requirements for closed captioning of video pro-  
13          gramming set forth in section 723 of the Communications  
14          Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 613) and the rules prescribed  
15          thereunder.

16          (b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of this Act,  
17          an eligible entity is a court reporting program that—

18                (1) can document and demonstrate to the Sec-  
19                retary of Commerce that it meets minimum stand-  
20                ards of educational and financial accountability, with  
21                a curriculum capable of training realtime writers  
22                qualified to provide captioning services;

23                (2) is accredited by an accrediting agency rec-  
24                ognized by the Department of Education; and

1           (3) is participating in student aid programs  
2           under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

3           (c) PRIORITY IN GRANTS.—In determining whether  
4 to make grants under this section, the Secretary of Com-  
5 merce shall give a priority to eligible entities that, as de-  
6 termined by the Secretary—

7           (1) possess the most substantial capability to  
8           increase their capacity to train realtime writers;

9           (2) demonstrate the most promising collabora-  
10          tion with local educational institutions, businesses,  
11          labor organizations, or other community groups hav-  
12          ing the potential to train or provide job placement  
13          assistance to realtime writers; or

14          (3) propose the most promising and innovative  
15          approaches for initiating or expanding training or  
16          job placement assistance efforts with respect to  
17          realtime writers.

18          (d) DURATION OF GRANT.—A grant under this sec-  
19          tion shall be for a period of 2 years.

20          (e) MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF GRANT.—The amount of  
21 a grant provided under subsection (a) to an entity eligible  
22 may not exceed \$1,500,000 for the 2-year period of the  
23 grant under subsection (d).

1 **SEC. 4. APPLICATION.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—To receive a grant under section  
3 3, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Sec-  
4 retary of Commerce at such time and in such manner as  
5 the secretary may require. The application shall contain  
6 the information set forth under subsection (b).

7 (b) INFORMATION.—Information in the application of  
8 an eligible entity under subsection (a) for a grant under  
9 section 3 shall include the following:

10 (1) A description of the training and assistance  
11 to be funded using the grant amount, including how  
12 such training and assistance will increase the num-  
13 ber of realtime writers.

14 (2) A description of performance measures to  
15 be utilized to evaluate the progress of individuals re-  
16 ceiving such training and assistance in matters relat-  
17 ing to enrollment, completion of training, and job  
18 placement and retention.

19 (3) A description of the manner in which the el-  
20 igible entity will ensure that recipients of scholar-  
21 ships, if any, funded by the grant will be employed  
22 and retained as realtime writers.

23 (4) A description of the manner in which the el-  
24 igible entity intends to continue providing the train-  
25 ing and assistance to be funded by the grant after

1 the end of the grant period, including any partner-  
 2 ships or arrangements established for that purpose.

3 (5) A description of how the eligible entity will  
 4 work with local workforce investment boards to en-  
 5 sure that training and assistance to be funded with  
 6 the grant will further local workforce goals, includ-  
 7 ing the creation of educational opportunities for in-  
 8 dividuals who are from economically disadvantaged  
 9 backgrounds or are displaced workers.

10 (6) Additional information, if any, of the eligi-  
 11 bility of the eligible entity for priority in the making  
 12 of grants under section 3(c).

13 (7) Such other information as the Secretary  
 14 may require.

15 **SEC. 5. USE OF FUNDS.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity receiving a  
 17 grant under section 3 shall use the grant amount for pur-  
 18 poses relating to the recruitment, training and assistance,  
 19 and job placement of individuals, including individuals  
 20 who have completed a court reporting training program,  
 21 as realtime writers, including—

22 (1) recruitment;

23 (2) subject to subsection (b), the provision of  
 24 scholarships;

25 (3) distance learning;

1           (4) further developing and implementing both  
 2           English and Spanish curriculum to more effectively  
 3           train realtime writing skills, and education in the  
 4           knowledge necessary for the delivery of high-quality  
 5           closed captioning services;

6           (5) mentoring students to ensure successful  
 7           completion of the realtime training and provide as-  
 8           sistance in job placement;

9           (6) encouraging individuals with disabilities to  
 10          pursue a career in realtime writing; and

11          (7) the employment and payment of personnel  
 12          for all such purposes.

13          (b) SCHOLARSHIPS.—

14           (1) AMOUNT.—The amount of a scholarship  
 15           under subsection (a)(2) shall be based on the  
 16           amount of need of the recipient of the scholarship  
 17           for financial assistance, as determined in accordance  
 18           with part F of title IV of the Higher Education Act  
 19           of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087kk).

20           (2) AGREEMENT.—Each recipient of a scholar-  
 21           ship under subsection (a)(2) shall enter into an  
 22           agreement with the school in which the recipient is  
 23           enrolled to provide realtime writing services for a pe-  
 24           riod of time appropriate (as determined by the Sec-

1       retary of Commerce or the Secretary's designee) for  
2       the amount of the scholarship received.

3           (3) COURSEWORK AND EMPLOYMENT.—The  
4       Secretary of Commerce or the Secretary's designee  
5       shall establish requirements for coursework and em-  
6       ployment for recipients of scholarships under sub-  
7       section (a)(2), including requirements for repayment  
8       of scholarship amounts in the event of failure to  
9       meet such requirements for coursework and employ-  
10      ment. Requirements for repayment of scholarship  
11      amounts shall take into account the effect of eco-  
12      nomic conditions on the capacity of scholarship re-  
13      cipients to find work as realtime writers.

14      (c) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The recipient of a  
15      grant under section 3 may not use more than 5 percent  
16      of the grant amount to pay administrative costs associated  
17      with activities funded by the grant. The Secretary shall  
18      use not more than 5 percent of the amount available for  
19      grants under this Act in any fiscal year for administrative  
20      costs of the program.

21      (d) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Grants amounts  
22      under this Act shall supplement and not supplant other  
23      Federal or non-Federal funds of the grant recipient for  
24      purposes of promoting the training and placement of indi-  
25      viduals as realtime writers.



1 **SEC. 6. REPORTS.**

2 (a) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Each eligible entity receiv-  
3 ing a grant under section 3 shall submit to the Secretary  
4 of Commerce, at the end of each year of the grant period,  
5 a report on the activities of such entity with respect to  
6 the use of grant amounts during such year.

7 (b) REPORT INFORMATION.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each report of an entity for  
9 a year under subsection (a) shall include a descrip-  
10 tion of the use of grant amounts by the entity dur-  
11 ing such year, including an assessment by the entity  
12 of the effectiveness of activities carried out using  
13 such funds in increasing the number of realtime  
14 writers. The assessment shall utilize the performance  
15 measures submitted by the entity in the application  
16 for the grant under section 4(b).

17 (2) FINAL REPORT.—The final report of an en-  
18 tity on a grant under subsection (a) shall include a  
19 description of the best practices identified by the en-  
20 tity as a result of the grant for increasing the num-  
21 ber of individuals who are trained, employed, and re-  
22 tained in employment as realtime writers.

23 (c) ANNUAL REVIEW.—The Inspector General of the  
24 Department of Commerce shall conduct an annual review  
25 of the management, efficiency, and effectiveness of the  
26 grants made under this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2       There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-  
3 retary of Commerce to carry out this Act \$20,000,000 for  
4 each of fiscal years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

5 **SEC. 8. SUNSET.**

6       This Act is repealed effective the last day of the fifth  
7 fiscal year in which funds are appropriated to carry out  
8 this Act.

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