

From: Tom Page, proponent of SB 284, In person and written, topage@swbell.net, 316-734-4839

Greetings Chairman Fagg and Committee Members,

Since 2007 blind, visually impaired, deaf / blind, and other print disabled Kansans have been able to access news and information sources in audio, large print, and braille through a library service called 'NFB-Newsline'. The service has been funded in a variety of ways over the years, primarily by the Kansas National Federation of the Blind affiliate and by grants and corporate sponsorships. In the last session the basic service was funded for 1 year by the legislature.

The newsline service provides access to over 500 periodicals from Kansas newspapers including: The Topeka Capitol-Journal, The Wichita Eagle, The Hays Daily, Hutchinson News, the Garden City Telegram, Kansas City Star, the Ottawa Harold, and the Salina Journal. In addition, there are newspapers from all over the country, access to the press syndicate feeds, and just about every sort of magazine or national newsletter that you might think of. From early readers to senior citizens there are publication of interest (e.g. 'Highlights for Kids', 'AARP Magazine').

I cannot emphasize how important it is to be connected to the world of news; from schoolwork, to understanding current events that impact our lives and businesses to educational and entertainment these periodical resources keep us informed and allow us to interact with our communities in an informed way.

The newsline program also provides up to date weather information by zip code. This is the only resource available to the deaf / blind community for this vital information. In addition, the program offers access to two national job listing services

We have been able to keep the service alive over the years but as volunteers we have only been able to promote the service within our organization. If enacted SB 284 will provide a stable funding source and provide for an administrative and outreach position within the state library 'Kansas Talking Books Library'. We believe that with the proper outreach in place that several thousands of Kansans will benefit from access to the service.

The Kansas Universal Service Fund (administrated by the Kansas Corporation Commission) has provided a variety of telephone information services to deaf and hard of hearing Kansans and at one time provided large button telephones for blind seniors. We are in agreement with the principal stakeholders at the KCC that the newsline service is a natural fit for this funding mechanism.

Please feel free to reach out for any information you may need.

Thanks for considering SB 284.

Tom Page

President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas

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