

SENATE CONCURRENT STUDY REQUEST NO. 1

BY SENATOR COLOMB

A CONCURRENT STUDY REQUEST

To request the Senate Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs to meet and function as a joint committee to study the feasibility of providing an interpreter for the hearing impaired and closed captioning of legislative proceedings.

WHEREAS, hearing loss is among the most common problems in our population, with more than ten percent of Americans suffering from some sort of hearing impairment; and

WHEREAS, closed captioning and interpreter services allow persons with hearing impairments to have access to television programming by displaying the audio portion of a television program as text on the television screen; and

WHEREAS, the same such courtesy should be extended to constituents so that they are privy to legislative proceedings and may be actively involved in the legislative process; and

WHEREAS, the first use of closed captioning on televisions in America began in 1980; and

WHEREAS, the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 was passed by Congress giving the Federal Communications Commission the power to enact rules on the implementation of closed captioning; and

WHEREAS, it is important that we utilize technology in the most efficient way to enhance communication with constituents that are hearing impaired so that they will have equal access to the political process; and

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, to achieve the goals of the ADA, state government services must be

equally accessible to individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana provides internet streamed legislative sessions and hearings, but fails to offer closed captioning and an interpreter for the hearing impaired; and

WHEREAS, there are nearly 2,804,831 deaf citizens, and over 78,451 citizens with hearing impairments in Louisiana who could benefit from captioning and interpreter services; and

WHEREAS, providing closed captioning and interpreting of legislative sessions and hearings would ensure Louisiana's compliance with Title II of the ADA.

THEREFORE, the Legislature of Louisiana requests that the Senate Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs study the feasibility of providing an interpreter for the hearing impaired and closed captioning of legislative proceedings.

The Legislature of Louisiana further requests that the joint committee report its findings to the legislature by February 1, 2017.

A copy of this Study Request shall be transmitted to the Department of Health and Hospitals, Louisiana Commission for the Deaf.