

Calendar No. 790

108TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
108-399 }

**TRAINING FOR REALTIME WRITERS ACT
OF 2003**

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

ON

S. 480



OCTOBER 11, 2004.—Ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

39-010

WASHINGTON : 2004

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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Mr. MCCAIN, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 480]

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, to which was referred the bill (S. 480) 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, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The primary objective of this legislation is to allow funding to be made available for the purpose of training real-time writers qualified to provide captioning services.

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS

There are over 28 million deaf or hard-of-hearing Americans who rely on closed captioning to get news and other vital information. Closed captioning also opens the world to the deaf and hard-of-hearing by allowing them to interact and participate in civic and personal events. Further, an additional 72 million Americans benefit from closed captioning including remedial readers, young children learning to read, and individuals learning English as a second language.

When Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 it required that all video programming distributors provide 100 percent captioned video programming by 2006 for all nonexempt programming created after 1998. The National Court Reporters Association has estimated that up to 3,000 English language captioners will be

needed to fulfill the 100 percent requirement. Currently there are about 300 captioners who can consistently write 180 words per minute with an accuracy rate of at least 98.5 percent for over 1,700 television stations in the United States. This legislation would assist in fulfilling the Congressional requirement.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On February 27, 2003, Senator Harkin introduced S. 480, the "Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2003". The bill has 45 cosponsors. One other bill relating to the funding for real-time writers has been introduced during the 108th Congress. The bill is H.R. 970, introduced by Representative Kind and cosponsored by 131 members of the House of Representatives.

On September 22, 2004, the Committee met in Executive Session and voted to report the bill favorably to the full Senate.

ESTIMATED COSTS

In accordance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee provides the following cost estimate, prepared by the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, September 28, 2004.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
*Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for S. 480, the Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2003.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Susanne Mehlman.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH M. ROBINSON
(For Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Director.)

Enclosure.

S. 480—Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2003

Summary: CBO estimates that implementing this legislation would cost \$40 million over the next five years, assuming the appropriation of the authorized amounts. The funds would be used by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to provide grants to entities that train court reporters, including court reporters who have completed training programs for realtime writers. The grants would be used to promote training and job placement for such individuals.

Enacting this bill would not affect direct spending or revenues. S. 480 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA); any costs to state, local, or tribal governments would result from complying with conditions of federal assistance.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impact of S. 480 is shown in the following table. For this esti-

mate, CBO assumes that \$20 million authorized to be appropriated for both 2005 and 2006 will be appropriated and that outlays will follow historical trends for similar programs. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 370 (commerce and housing credit).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION					
Authorization Level	20	20	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	2	11	14	9	4

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: S. 480 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA; any costs to state, local, or tribal governments would result from complying with conditions of federal assistance.

Estimate prepared by: Federal Costs: Susanne S. Mehlman; Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Sarah Puro; Impact on the Private Sector: Jean Talarico.

Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee provides the following evaluation of the regulatory impact of the legislation, as reported:

Number of persons covered

The legislation provides an authorization of appropriations for the fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006 and makes funds available for fiscal year 2007 to enable the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to provide grants to fund educational programs to train real-time writers. This bill will affect more than 28,000,000 deaf or hard of hearing individuals as well as 72,000,000 individuals who use closed captioning services.

Economic impact

Section 7 of this bill authorizes appropriations of \$20 million for fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006 and makes funds available for 2007.

Privacy

This legislation will not have any adverse impact on the personal privacy of the individuals affected.

Paperwork

S. 480 would require each eligible entity receiving grants to submit to the NTIA a report describing the use of grant amounts and the effectiveness of activities aimed at increasing the number of real-time writers. The bill also would require a final report by each entity receiving grants on best practices for increasing the number of individuals who are trained, employed, and retained in employment as real-time writers.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

Section 1 would provide that the bill may be cited as the “Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2003”.

Section 2. Findings

Section 2 sets forth Congressional findings on the need for closed captioning services. The findings detail the history of the Federal Communications Commission’s adopted rules requiring closed-captioning and its accompanying studies that demonstrate the benefit that affected people receive from closed captioning services.

Section 3. Authorization of grant program to promote training and job placement of realtime writers

Section 3 would authorize the NTIA to provide grants to accredited educational institutions. Grants would be for a period of two years and not exceed \$1.5 million.

Section 4. Application

Section 4 would provide information on the application process to receive a grant from NTIA.

Section 5. Use of funds

Section 5 would set forth the requirements for the use of funds for entities receiving grants. Grants would be used for recruitment, training and assistance, and job placement for individuals who have completed a court reporting training program.

Section 6. Reports

Section 6 would require each entity receiving a grant to provide a report to NTIA, at the end of each year of the grant period.

Section 7. Authorization of appropriations

Section 7 would authorize \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006, and make funds available if necessary for fiscal year 2007.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee states that the bill as reported would make no change to existing law.