

UNITED STATES SENATOR GEORGIA

MAX CLELAND

PRESS RELEASE

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CLELAND RELEASES REPORT EMPHASIZING NEED FOR AFFORDABLE BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Senator Max Cleland today released a report to the Senate Commerce Committee which highlights the benefits of broadband technology for people with disabilities. The report, *Broadband and Americans with Disabilities*, was written by Dr. Frank Bowe, a Hofstra University professor and consultant to the National Association for the Deaf.

“The most amazing part about the technological revolution to me has been the incredible effect that access to technology can have for people with disabilities,” Senator Cleland said. **“For example, if a person is deaf but has full use of the Internet, that person suddenly has no disability in the eyes of the Internet. If a person has decreased mobility because of a physical disability, that person can suddenly have access to education and employment they never would have had. I cannot think of another development in my lifetime that has had such a positive effect on the lives of people with disabilities.”**

Among the findings of the report is evidence that people with disabilities currently access the Internet at roughly the same rate as those without disabilities, thus denouncing the notion that there is a technology gap or digital divide in the disability community. However, the report also emphasizes the need for the United States to develop policies that will accelerate the nation-wide availability of accessible and affordable broadband infrastructure.

Senator Ted Kennedy, the Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee is a long time supporter of efforts to improve quality of live for Americans with disabilities. Broadband access can be critical to that. **“Among the many uses of broadband, few rival its potential as a great online equalized for millions of Americans with disabilities,”** he said. **“Any national broadband policy by Congress must ensure affordable and equal access to the Internet so that all Americans with disabilities can have the same opportunities to contribute to society in a way that everybody does. I commend Dr. Bowe and the National Association for the Deaf for their insightful report that brings attention to this important issue.”**