

Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), co-chair of the Congressional Public Broadcasting Caucus, today introduced a bi-partisan resolution honoring the National Captioning Institute (NCI) on its 25th Anniversary of providing closed captioning services to Americans who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The resolution is also sponsored by Congressmen Edward Markey (D-Mass.), Tom Davis (R-Va.), Donald Payne (D-N.J.), James Walsh (R-N.Y.), and Jim Ryun (R-Kan.).

“NCI pioneered the first closed captioning service in the world and has set the highest standards for quality and performance,” said Blumenauer. “As the co-chair of the Congressional Public Broadcasting Caucus, I’m pleased to honor its work. Closed captioning has made a tremendous difference in the lives of millions of Americans, allowing all Americans to enjoy shared television favorites from Monday Night Football to Sesame Street to C-Span.”

The National Captioning Institute was established in 1979 as a nonprofit corporation with the mission of promoting and providing access to television programs for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing through the technology of closed captioning. NCI presented the first closed-captioned television programs in 1980 and continues to be at the forefront of technological advances, even offering captioning for streaming media on the Internet and described video services for individuals who are blind or have low vision. NCI captions over 70,000 hours of pre-recorded and live programming each year. In addition, thousands of VHS home videos and DVDs are available with captions and subtitles. Captioning is also a successful teaching tool for children learning to read, those learning English as a second language and to improve skills for people with learning disabilities.

By 2006, virtually 100 percent of new television programming will be closed captioned as mandated by Congress in the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

Closed captioning displays the verbatim dialogue, narration and ambient sound effects of a video program as words on a television screen, similar to subtitles on a movie. Unlike subtitled movies, closed captioning allows the viewer to choose whether or not to display the captions that are transmitted within the broadcast signal in encoded (or closed) form. A decoder built into or attached to a television set is used to “open” the captions and display the words on the TV screen.