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## Coordinating services will aid deaf, hard-of-hearing

*Democrat & Chronicle* - July 24, 2007

T. Alan Hurwitz, Vice President and Dean of NTID  
Guest essayist for the *Democrat and Chronicle*

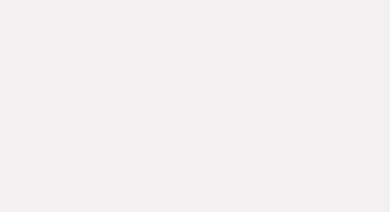
On Tuesday, July 2, Governor Spitzer signed legislation that for the first time will allow for the development of a comprehensive services system for deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing individuals throughout New York State.

The creation of The New York State Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing two days before the celebration of our country's independence was indeed serendipitous, and for our state's deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing population it was indeed opportune. This law improves opportunities for access to the services they need for medical, housing, transportation, technology, personal care, family and day programs. It increases their independence and their ability to advocate for the delivery of these comprehensive services.

Until now, services for deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing people have been provided by a variety of state and private agencies. While well-intentioned, there has been a serious need for coordination and collaboration throughout the system, as well as a centralized clearinghouse of information on what services are available. Additionally, this legislation calls for the collection and maintenance of data on the incidence of deafness, deaf-blindness and other hearing loss among residents of New York state - giving agencies and service providers the ability to better understand and meet the needs in their communities.

With such a large deaf and hard-of-hearing population in greater Rochester as a result of the presence of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, it is not surprising that this legislation was introduced in the State Senate and Assembly by two individuals who consistently advocate for the Deaf community - Senator Joseph Robach and Assemblyman Joseph Morelle. We owe them a debt of gratitude for recognizing the needs that this legislation will address, and for moving this bill forward and ensuring it would make it to the Governor's desk.

All residents of New York interested in seeking efficiency in government and the delivery of needed services, not just those who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard-of-hearing, should



feel good about this legislation. We thank Governor Spitzer for advancing his goal of streamlining government services with the creation of this Interagency Coordinating Council. We look forward to his leadership taking us further down the road of independence for all New Yorkers.

**Rochester Institute of Technology**

National Technical Institute for the Deaf

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