

Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act

U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)

BACKGROUND:

From the classroom, workplace or doctor's office to sharing content with loved ones on social media, websites and software applications, or apps, play an integral role in our daily lives. Thirty-two years after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, millions of people with disabilities, continue to face barriers to access and are significantly less likely to use the internet or apps due to inaccessible technology. It is essential that websites and applications be accessible to people with disabilities so that they can participate fully in all aspects of society. Even though the Department of Justice has provided guidance, saying that the ADA does apply to websites, the courts have varied significantly in their interpretation of the ADA's scope.

BILL SUMMARY:

The "Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act" would clarify that it is unlawful for the entities currently covered by the ADA to maintain inaccessible websites and applications that exclude or otherwise discriminate against people with disabilities. It would establish a clear, enforceable accessibility standard, and establish a technical assistance center and advisory committee to provide advice and guidance on accessible websites and applications. It would also authorize a study to address emerging technologies.

The bill is supported by: Access Living, American Association of People with Disabilities, American Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Blinded Veterans Association, CommunicationFIRST, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Epilepsy Foundation of America, Hearing Loss Association of America, National Association of the Deaf, National Disability Rights Network, National Federation of the Blind, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc., The Arc and United Spinal Association.

Representative John Sarbanes (D-MD-03) introduced the same bill in the House of Representatives.