US DOJ Extends Deadline for Compliance with Web Accessibility Rule by One Year

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On April 17, 2026, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has published an Interim Final Rule that **extends the compliance deadline of its website accessibility** rule for state and local governments by one year. The rule extension allows local leaders important additional time to plan, budget, and implement required updates to their websites and mobile apps.

What Exactly Changed?

- State and local governments with a **total population of 50,000 or more**, which faced a deadline of April 24, 2026, now have until **April 26, 2027**.
- **Smaller public entities and special district governments** (population <50,000), which had until April 26, 2027, now have until **April 26, 2028.**

The Interim Final Rule is limited to extending the compliance dates. It doesn't change any substantive requirements; Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA remains the required standard. **Municipalities, other public entities, and special district governments are still required to make their web content and mobile apps accessible under Title II.** Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act still requires accessible municipal services, programs, and activities.

What Should Municipalities Do?

- Run a full WCAG 2.1 AA audit of primary web properties and mobile apps. Free, online audit tools will catch many of the issues and provide a place to start.
- Inventory third-party content and vendor obligations tied to the Rule.
- Build a plan to update websites and mobile apps with realistic timelines.
- Put a system in place to track fixes, validate them, and monitor regressions.

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- Train local officials, volunteers, and staff who create, post, or manage web content and services, such as minutes, event flyers, and payment apps.

The 5 Most Common Accessibility Issues in Websites and Mobile Apps

1. **Insufficient Color Contrast**

   Text and background colors often fail to meet contrast ratios – the difference in brightness between text and its background. This harms low vision and color-blind users. Printing your webpage in grayscale can help you spot contrast issues.
2. **Missing or Inadequate Image Alt Text**

   Images that don't use descriptive alternative text (alt text) prevent screen reader users from understanding visual content. Alt text briefly describes the key elements of an image that adds value to the webpage's text.
3. **Missing or Inadequate Heading Structure**

   Screen reader users rely on heading hierarchy to understand page organization. Setting up your webpage to use hierarchical text – such as main titles, section headers, subsection titles, and body text – helps screen readers distinguish content. Using the "Styles" function in Word documents versus changing the color of title text is an example of using heading structure.
4. **Inaccessible Forms**

   Forms may lack proper labels, skip links, or fail to support screen reader navigation, which makes data entry difficult for people with cognitive or visual disabilities. Forms that are not accessible often use a colored box or a blank line in locations where someone should input an answer.
5. **Inaccessible Links**

   Generic text for links, such as "Learn More" or "Here", do not tell the user what

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action will happen or where the link leads, making the link inaccessible for many people. Using descriptive language such as "Download the application" or "Read the minutes" makes text links more accessible.

Municipalities also should be aware that **videos and audio files must have captions, transcripts, or descriptive audio descriptions** so as not to exclude deaf and hard-of-hearing users. This is especially important now that Vermont's municipalities are required to record meetings.

Learn About the Rule

Learn more about these accessibility requirements by reading summaries of this rule at:

- New Federal Rule Requires Municipal Website and Mobile App Accessibility (Updated), Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- State and Local Governments: First Steps Toward Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Web and Mobile Application Accessibility Rule, U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (ada.gov)

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