



35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & CONSUMER PROTECTION

THE HONORABLE CARLA J. JOSEPH

BILL NO.

35-0236

TESTIMONY

JULIEN E. HENLEY SR.

TERRITORIAL ADA COORDINATOR

MAY 20, 2024

BILL 35-0236
PRESENTATION
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Submitted by:
Julien E. Henley Sr.
Territorial ADA Coordinator

1 Good Day, Honorable Chairwoman Carla J. Joseph., members of the Committee on Government
2 Operations & Consumer Protection, other Senators present, my fellow testifiers, and to the
3 listening and viewing audience. I am Julien E. Henley Sr., Territorial ADA (Americans with
4 Disabilities Act) Coordinator for the Government of the Virgin Islands, and I am here today at
5 your request to testify on Bill 35-0236; An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code adding a new
6 chapter 33A to enact the “21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA)” to improve
7 governmental agency digital services, and for other purposes.

8 I thank Senator Carrión for bringing forward bill and including my input in this local version of
9 the federal law, which allows for citizens with certain disabilities both locally and abroad to have
10 access to our records and services. As we are mindful that such a door can only be unlocked
11 through the key of ADA-accessible websites, this initiative aligns perfectly with the goals of the
12 Bryan-Roach Administration, where our Governor continues to emphasize the importance of
13 improving our digital footprint as a government for the benefit of our people and partners,
14 wherever they are in the world.

15 The responsibility to ensure accessible services and communications falls under both Titles II and
16 IV of the ADA, the former requiring our local government to give people with disabilities an equal
17 opportunity to benefit from all programs, services, and activities, and the latter requiring
18 individuals with disabilities to have access to effective communication comparable to those
19 without disabilities. For example, we will be creating opportunities for persons who have low
20 vision or are blind to effectively receive communications via large print and e-readers on our
21 government agency websites.

22 In 2021, the Governor’s ADA Coordinator Office partnered with FEMA to conduct several
23 sessions that covered creating accessible electronic posts for over a period of several months. In
24 attendance were the Government of the Virgin Islands’ Public Information Officers (PIOs),
25 employed and contracted Information Technology (IT) Officers, Human Resources Officers, and
26 Bureau of Information Technology (BIT) employees, as we covered the mandated Section 508
27 topics:

- 28 • Section 508: What it is & Why it is Important
- 29 • Website Compliance Overview
- 30 • Remediating PDF Documents for 508 Compliance
- 31 • Creating Accessible Microsoft Word Documents
- 32 • Creating Accessible Microsoft Power Point Presentations
- 33 • Creating Accessible Microsoft Outlook Email
- 34 • Creating Accessible Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets

35 The next step is for us to work with all departments and agencies to set new standards for the GVI
36 and our contracted website partners.

37 Over the years the federal government has introduced several amendments directly tied to Title IV
38 of the ADA and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the required accommodations
39 for protected individuals in need include modernized solutions that improve accessibility without
40 discouraging technological advancements. Thus today, people who are blind may now use a free
41 mobile currency reader that identifies and counts which bill they are paying with, along with the
42 amount of change they are receiving. They may also read our local daily newspapers with their e-
43 reader technology, like volunteer-sourced “Be My Eye” and now “Be My AI,” both which provide
44 free human text-to-voice services. Because there are so many options for technological assistive
45 devices, standards should be set that will allow us to confidently implement impactful
46 improvements within our websites.

47 I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share my presentation; I am available to
48 answer any questions you may have.