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**Our focus on legislation and regulation includes a look at the upcoming ADA compliance regulations that will impact all public entities starting this year.**



## Managing Change in Trenton

**J**ohn C. Maxwell once wrote, “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” I’m reminded of that quote every other January as one legislative session ends and a new one begins. It’s particularly relevant this year as one Governor finished his term and a new Governor begins her term.

New Governor. New Legislature. It’s an inevitable change, but our challenges remain as does our opportunity for growth. But how to manage that change and that growth?

As we begin the 222nd Legislative Term, I would like to highlight that during the 221st Legislative Term (January 9, 2024 to January 13, 2026), 12,074 bills were introduced or proposed. The League’s Legislative Team tracked 3,168 bills, working hard to make certain your voices were heard in Trenton. That level of service and advocacy will not change.

What will change is the opportunity to forge new relationships with the first-year class of Legislators, renew our partnerships with returning members and work with the Sherrill Administration to help you address your challenges at home.

### How you can help

Our annual Legislative Guide is included in this issue, sharing information about state and federal legislative processes and how the League is your partner and advocate. Since last year, we’ve added a new legislative analyst, Erin Knoedler, and a new Legislative Counsel, Sadayah Q. DuRant-Brown, Esq., to our team. Both are experienced in government issues and ready to listen to your concerns and act for you.

Please make your voice heard this year by sharing with the League and your state-level representatives your specific policy-related needs. Take the opportunity to volunteer for any League committees or task forces studying issues important to you.

This issue also includes an outlook for 2026 from Democrat and Republican leaders from the statehouse. They look at topics including affordable housing, health care costs, and the potential for year to come.

Finally, our focus on legislation and regulation features a look at the upcoming ADA compliance regulations that will impact all public entities starting this year. On April 24, 2026 public entities with populations greater than 50,000 people must comply with the Department of Justice’s new guidelines, and towns with less than 50,000 people and special district governments have until April 26, 2027 to comply.

Have you sent in an entry for the Show Off Your City photo contest yet? It’s not too late! Municipalities are invited to send us photos of their tourist attractions, downtown areas, economic development initiatives, parks, city halls, community groups, and new projects. Images are due on February 6 and the winner will be featured on the cover of the April 2025 issue and will win a free League publication of your choice. To apply, visit [www.njlm.org/FormCenter/Show-Off-Your-City-22/2025-Show-Off-Your-City-Photo-Contest-195](http://www.njlm.org/FormCenter/Show-Off-Your-City-22/2025-Show-Off-Your-City-Photo-Contest-195).

April is also the month of Local Government Week, which will be held April 12-18. Participating? Use the NJ Local Government Week hashtag, #NJLocalGovt, when promoting your activities on social media. 📌

*Michael Cerra*



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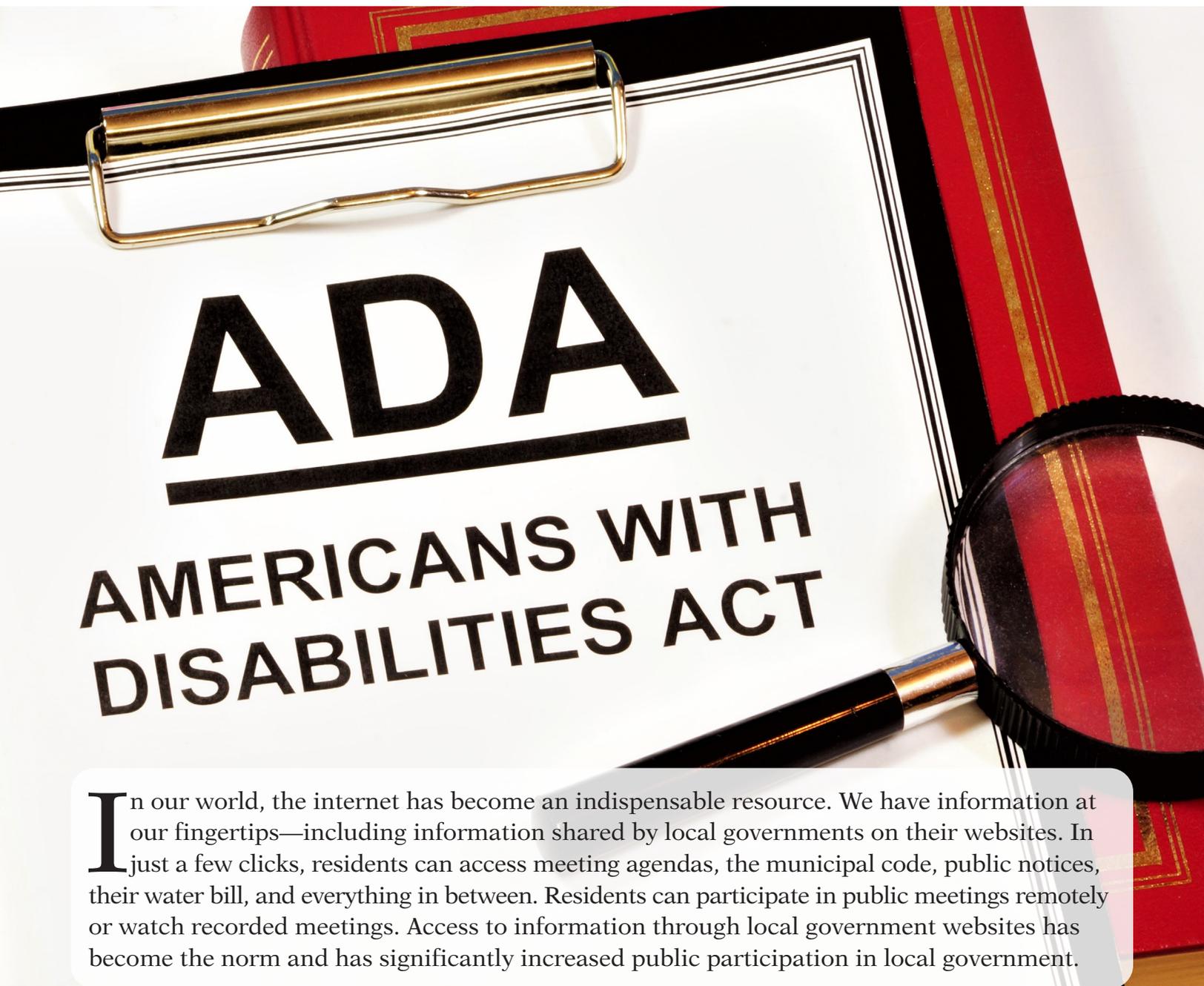




# ADA Website Accessibility

Understanding the Department of Justice's final rules and what they mean for your municipality in 2026 and beyond

Michael Herbert, Esq., *Shareholder*, and Alexis Smith, Esq., *Associate*,  
*Municipal and Government*, Parker McCay P.A



In our world, the internet has become an indispensable resource. We have information at our fingertips—including information shared by local governments on their websites. In just a few clicks, residents can access meeting agendas, the municipal code, public notices, their water bill, and everything in between. Residents can participate in public meetings remotely or watch recorded meetings. Access to information through local government websites has become the norm and has significantly increased public participation in local government.

Yet, many with disabilities are unable to effectively gather information and participate in this new online world, because they cannot effectively access local government websites. While many websites provide some form of accessibility, they often remain ineffective for individuals with certain types of disabilities, require much more effort by the reader to digest the material, or convey the information in a more cumbersome fashion.

**These standards are a large step forward towards ensuring that those with disabilities have equal access to information, services, and programs offered by their state and local governments and other public entities via websites and apps.**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires local governments to provide equal access to services, programs, and activities to people with disabilities. In April 2024, the Department of Justice adopted updated regulations for Title II of the ADA. As explained below, those regulations seek to address the gaps in accessibility for state and local government websites for those with disabilities.

**The Regulations**

The regulations, titled “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities” (28 CFR Part 35– Subpart H), apply to all public entities

covered by Title II of the ADA.

This includes state and local governments, as well as subsidiary departments agencies, instrumentalities, and special district governments. Special district governments include entities such as utility authorities, fire districts, or transit authorities.

Notably, the regulations apply to all web content and apps that a public entity provides or makes available. This means that the regulations also apply to web content and apps that the public entity makes available via contracts with vendors, partners, or through any other arrangement.



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While the regulations were effective in June 2024, the compliance dates are different based on the size of the public entity:

- April 24, 2026 for public entities with populations greater than 50,000 people
- April 26, 2027 for public entities with populations less than 50,000 people and special district governments.
- For entities like police departments or libraries, the compliance date is based upon their municipality's population.

At their core, these regulations require public entities to make all of their web content and apps readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities by conforming to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA requirements, a universal technical standard for web accessibility. Public entities may also provide accessibility by using alternative designs, technologies, and methods that provide substantially equivalent or greater access to users with disabilities as compared to those without.

### What It Looks Like

Some examples of the applicable WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards include the following:

- All recorded video with sound has accurate closed captions.
- Detailed instructions should not be reliant on a single sensory ability.
- Input fields should provide autocomplete option in browsers and assistive technologies can help guide and facilitate input.
- Websites can be zoomed in without requiring horizontal scrolling or causing a poor experience.
- If a user is submitting important information (legal, financial, etc.), the webpage should provide a way to reverse, correct, or review the transaction or submission.



### Five Exceptions

There are five limited exceptions for when information on public entities' websites and apps do not have to comply with the WCAG 2.1 Level AA standard.

1. Archived web content.
2. Preexisting conventional electronic documents, such as PDFs that were available before the compliance date.
3. Content posted by a third party that was not posted due to contract, licensing, or other arrangements with the public entity.
4. Individualized, secured conventional documents, such as the PDF version of an online water bill.
5. Preexisting social media posts, meaning social media posts made before the compliance date.

Like many other ADA requirements, even when an exception applies, the public entity may still need to provide an accessible alternative to ensure effective communication and equal access when requested by an individual.

### Right Around the Corner

For some local governments, these requirements are right around the corner. Even for the smaller public entities that have until April 2027 to comply, the affected entities should take an inventory of their web content and resources to determine what information must be made accessible. Local governments should also have an open dialogue with their contractors, vendors, and professionals to ensure that those who will be responsible for making web content accessible are aware of the requirements, and how they should be implemented.

Even though these regulations may impose a burden on local public entities, these standards are a large step forward toward ensuring that those with disabilities have equal access to information, services, and programs offered by their state and local governments and other public entities via websites and apps. 🗺️

@ For comprehensive guidance on what these regulations mean for your local government and public entity, visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

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## Former Governor Richard Codey Remembered



New Jersey's longest-serving legislator and former Governor, Richard James Codey, died at home in Roseland on January 11, 2026, at the age of 79 following a brief illness.

Codey was a devoted public servant until his retirement in 2024. Born in Orange, Governor Codey began his political career in 1974. He first served in the New Jersey General Assembly and then was elected to the State Senate in 1982. One of his early impactful efforts was an undercover investigation where he worked as an orderly at Marlboro Psychiatric Hospital, exposing dire conditions that spurred significant reforms in mental health care across the state. This early advocacy foreshadowed a lifelong commitment to mental health initiatives, a cause he championed with passion and personal understanding.

Codey was first acting governor in 2002 for 3.5 days when he was co-President of the Senate and became acting governor once again in November 2004 following the resignation of Governor Jim McGreevey. He established the Governor's Task Force on Mental Health and signed the nation's first legislative moratorium on capital punishment. In January 2006, legislation he signed officially recognized him as the 53rd Governor of New Jersey.

After his governorship, Codey returned to the State Senate, continuing his legislative work until his retirement in January 2024, serving as acting governor more than 100 times for Gov. Jon S. Corzine.

Over the years, he was a fixture at the League Conference's former governor's panels, providing insights and predictions on New Jersey politics.

His 50 years of continuous service made him the longest-serving state legislator in New Jersey history, which was honored with the naming of the NJ State House's new pavilion, the Governor Richard J. Codey Welcome Center.

Codey was the author of a memoir, "Me, Governor? My Life in the Rough-and-Tumble World of New Jersey Politics" and his work in the business world included his family funeral business and an insurance company.

Alongside his wife, Mary Jo, he co-founded The Codey Fund for Mental Health in 2012. He is survived by his wife, sons Kevin and Christopher, and his grandchildren. ❄️

## Passage: William Holzapfel, City Attorney, Elizabeth; NJLM Assoc. Counsel



Elizabeth City Attorney and League Associate Counsel William Richard Holzapfel, known to many as Bill, died December 13, 2025, at his home in Maplewood.

He was born on January 16, 1932, in Elizabeth and spent his entire life in New Jersey. After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School in Elizabeth, Bill earned a Bachelor of Arts from Union College in Schenectady, NY. He went on to serve as an infantry officer in Korea with the United States Marine Corps. Upon returning home, he obtained his law degree from Albany Law School in Albany, NY.

Bill built a distinguished legal career. He founded the firm Holzapfel, Perkins, and Kelly in Cranford, and later joined the New York firm LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby, and MacRae. For the last 32 years of his career, he served as City Attorney for Elizabeth-his hometown-a role he often described as "the best job I ever had."

His commitment to public service extended beyond his professional work; he served as President of the Union County Bar Association and chaired the New Jersey Clients' Security Fund. He was also an Associate Counsel for the New Jersey State League of Municipalities and a NJILGA Senior Trustee. In 2020 he received the Fred G. Stickel III Award from NJILGA and also received awards from the Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce, Groundwork Elizabeth, Patriots' Path Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless. He was a member of the Advisory Board of the Kean University Liberty Hall Center for History and a Director of the Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce. In parallel with his legal career, he remained active in the Marine Corps Reserve as a Judge Advocate General, retiring with the rank of colonel.

Bill was first married to Anne Johnston (deceased), with whom he raised three children. He later married Frances Morton, sharing nearly 40 years of marriage. He is survived by his wife Frances Holzapfel of Maplewood; daughter Jane Leslie Lengyel of Falmouth, MA; son William Holzapfel of Mahwah; daughter Amy Thomas of Takoma Park, MD; six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

A memorial service will be held in 2026. ❄️

# Mayors & Elected Officials Inducted to Halls of Fame

At the 110th Annual New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference in Atlantic City, then League President Paul Tomasko and officials from throughout New Jersey honored the most recent inductees to the Mayors' Hall of Fame and the Elected Officials Hall of Fame

## Mayors' Hall of Fame 2025



### Platinum level (30 or more years)

Mayor Leonard C. Desiderio, Sea Isle City

### Gold level (10 or more years)

Mayor Dave Fried, Robbinsville Twp.  
Mayor Benedict Romeo, Cresskill Borough (posthumous)

### Silver level (10 or more years)

Mayor Samuel Cohen, Deal Borough  
Mayor Bert H. Steinman, Ewing Twp.  
Mayor Raymond Coles, Lakewood Twp.  
Mayor Derek Armstead, Linden City  
Mayor Patrick Rosenello, North Wildwood City  
Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, City of Orange Twp.  
Mayor Robert D. White, Saddle Brook Twp.  
Mayor Tony Vaz, Seaside Heights Borough  
Mayor Sheena C. Collum, South Orange Village



## Elected Officials Hall of Fame 2025

Mayor Marty Small Sr., Atlantic City  
Mayor Thomas Young, Branchburg Township  
Mayor Benedict Romeo, Cresskill Borough (posthumous)  
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Councilwoman Tency A. Eason, City of Orange Township  
Council President/Councilman John Sweeney, Peapack & Gladstone Borough  
Mayor Oscar Cradle, South Toms River  
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