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LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY BECOMES LAW

New Law Updates Accessibility Guidelines & Improves Ability for Businesses to Comply

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that her office's legislation to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in Illinois was signed into law by the Governor and will go into effect Jan. 1, 2017.

"Our commitment to equality for all must extend to making sure people who have disabilities have equal access to facilities within their communities," Madigan said. "People who have disabilities lead active lives, and our laws should enhance their ability to do so," Madigan said.

Senate Bill 2956, initiated by Madigan and sponsored by Sen. Linda Holmes and Rep. Ann Williams, updates the Illinois Environmental Barriers Act (EBA). The EBA, which was enacted in 1985, authorizes the Attorney General's Office to enforce accessibility standards for public buildings and multi-story housing units in Illinois. The law updates the EBA to make sure it aligns with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design and to make it possible for architects working in Illinois to refer to one code in order to comply with both federal and state accessibility requirements.

"I was proud to sponsor this measure because no one living in or visiting Illinois should be prevented from enjoying everything our communities have to offer, simply because they are unable to access businesses, schools, or housing," Holmes said. "This is an important new law, and I thank Attorney General Madigan for bringing this measure forward."

"As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to ensure that our laws facilitate equality for all Illinois residents," Williams said. "I will continue to push for laws that are designed to provide equal access for everyone, and I appreciate the Attorney General's advocacy."

In addition to initiating the legislation, Madigan's office is working with the Capital Development Board (CDB) to update the technical building regulations that correspond with the EBA, known as the Illinois Accessibility Code. Under current state law, the Illinois Accessibility Code must also be updated to incorporate changes to the federal standards. Madigan's office worked with the CDB and other stakeholders to ensure that SB 2956 reflects the anticipated changes to the Illinois Accessibility Code and aligns the state statute with the federal standards.

"Our members are committed to designs that inspire and are accessible to all, and SB 2956 will help architects ensure that projects meet both state and federal accessibility laws and regulations" said Dan Hohl, director of government affairs for the American Institute of Architects in Illinois. "The AIA appreciates the Attorney General's efforts to support people with disabilities, which also improves access to good design for all Illinoisans."

Changes to the Environmental Barriers Act under SB 2956 include:

- Updating the terms and definitions used in the EBA to conform with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and corresponding updates to the Illinois Accessibility Code;
- Replacing an outdated standard for building alterations with an easier-to-use standard that mirrors the ADA;
- Clarifying which version of the EBA and the Illinois Accessibility Code applies to new construction and alterations of existing buildings; and
- Updating the enforcement provisions to reflect the current emphasis on working with businesses to resolve issues and alleviate future barriers for individuals with disabilities.

Attorney General Madigan’s Disability Rights Bureau protects and advances the interests of people with disabilities in Illinois, and works with public and private entities seeking to comply with the disability rights laws. The bureau receives complaints regarding noncompliance with state and federal accessibility laws and works to bring facilities into compliance.

Complaints about accessibility can be submitted to Madigan’s office [online](#), or by contacting her Disability Rights Bureau at (312) 814-5684 (Chicago) or (217) 524-2660 (Springfield).

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