

The 2022 ADA Compliance Meter Report September 2022

Research Rationale

Given that Americans are entering a midterm election cycle with enormous implications for the future of the country and its most pressing issues—from inflation to environmental concerns and healthcare—the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired audited high-profile candidates’ websites in key races to ensure they met the accessibility requirements outlined by the Web Content Accessibility guidelines. Regardless of political affiliations and beliefs, all Americans deserve access to information about candidates that can help them make an informed voting decision.

Website accessibility is this generation’s wheelchair ramp. Americans cannot sit back while millions who live with vision impairment—a population that notably includes one in four seniors—are shut out of a key aspect of civic life. If voters cannot access candidates’ platforms and beliefs, they are short-changed when it comes to making an informed voting decision.

This is not the first time Virginia Jacko, the totally blind CEO of the Miami Lighthouse, and her team have analyzed political candidates’ websites to ensure equal access to American democracy. In 2019, when the first Democratic presidential debates were being held in Miami, FL, Jacko and her all-blind team of IT professionals audited every 2020 presidential candidate website. Not a single one was fully accessible to the blind and visually impaired. Her counsel led to several candidates updating their sites and paved the way for a more accessible WhiteHouse.Gov.

Title III in the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees people with all disabilities the right to equal access, including the blind and visually impaired. This should ensure equitable access to digital and online media in addition to physical spaces.

Below is a full report of our findings and methodology.

What We Uncovered

- None of the websites implemented the World-wide Web Consortium guidelines, and thus not compliant with the ADA.
- None of the candidates had an accessibility statement that provides a method of contact including a live email address and phone number that users can call for assistance.
- Candidate websites did not allow users to easily adjust color and font size.



Individual Candidate Scores

Scores range from 1, meaning ‘not accessible, 2, meaning “somewhat accessible”, 3, meaning “mostly accessible” to 4, meaning ‘fully accessible’.

Candidate (Alphabetical by Last Name)	Score
Stacey Abrams (Democrat, Georgia Gubernatorial Race)	3.50
Catherine Cortez Mastro (Democrat, Nevada Senate Race)	3.44
John Fetterman (Democrat, Pennsylvania Senate Race)	3.00
Kathy Hochul (Democrat, New York Gubernatorial Race)	3.11
Mark Kelly (Democrat, Arizona Senate Race)	3.10
Brian Kemp (Republican, Georgia Gubernatorial Race)	2.80
Adam Laxalt (Republican, Nevada Senate Race)	2.78
Blake Masters (Republican, Arizona Senate Race)	2.70
Doug Mastriano (Republican, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Race)	3.00
Dr. Mehmet Oz (Republican, Pennsylvania Senate Race)	2.33
Lisa Scheller (Democrat, Pennsylvania’s 7th Congressional District)	2.11

Josh Shapiro (Democrat, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Race)	3.00
Herschel Walker (Republican, Georgia Senate Race)	3.00
Raphael Warnock (Republican, Georgia Senate Race)	2.44
Susan Wild (Democrat, Pennsylvania's 7th Congressional District)	2.33
Lee Zeldin (Republican, New York Gubernatorial Race)	2.89

Our Methodology

An assessment was conducted by the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind from June 14 to June 16, 2022. The sample was comprised of the political candidates' official campaign websites as they appeared on those dates. Websites were assessed for accessibility to persons using assistive technology software such as screen readers. Candidate websites were ranked in order of accessibility. The process consisted of analyzing each website using the latest assistive technology screen reading software such as JAWS for Windows and the World-Wide Consortium (W3C) Website Accessibility Content Guidelines (WCAG v2.0/2.1) subset of 10 criteria. The review was conducted by the CEO of Miami Lighthouse and her IT experts, all of whom are blind. Scoring was based on the following criteria and scale:

We used a subset of the most common criteria from the WCAG v2.0/2.1. The weighting scale numbers assigned to each criteria were evaluated on a 50 percent scale majority. Therefore, as an example using the criteria of: "Is website organized for ease of navigation" using our best knowledge and experience with assistive technology software, if more than half of the individual pages examined on a particular website exceeded 50 percent of the specific criteria such as if the pages contained proper region divisions for page organization, the weight score would be a 3 for mostly accessible. If it fell below half of the individual pages, then the score would be a 2 for somewhat accessible.

In addition, if the specific criteria could not be verified using assistive technology software, then the score for that particular criteria would be a 1 for not accessible and if the criteria was fully verified using the assistive technology software throughout all pages on a site, then the score would be a 4 for fully accessible.

Criteria

- Is website organized for ease of navigation?
- Are headings appropriately structured?



- Do logos and links have descriptive alt text?
- Can users select active links with keystroke commands?
- Can users control changing images?
- Does site have play/pause video controls?
- Are users able to adjust color and font size?
- Can users easily fill out forms on site?
- Can users access error messages?
- Is there a commitment statement to website accessibility?

Scale

- 1: website was not accessible
- 2: website was somewhat accessible
- 3: website was mostly accessible
- 4: website was totally accessible

The Challenge

All candidates should ensure their websites are fully ADA compliant and immediately put an accessibility statement on their page. This statement should reinforce their commitment to website accessibility and should provide a phone number and live email address for anyone needing assistance navigating the website.

About the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Since 1930, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, an independent organization, has been Florida's premier rehabilitation organization serving the blind. The mission of the Miami Lighthouse is to provide vision rehabilitation and eye health services that promote education and independence, to collaborate with and train professionals and to conduct research in related fields. Miami Lighthouse serves over 22,000 blind and visually impaired people of all ages each year.

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