

## Your Rights Under the Congressional Accountability Act



# Disability Access

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**Section 210 of the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA)** protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination with regard to access to public services, programs, activities, or places of public accommodation in covered locations and offices. These protections extend to both employees and members of the public. Individuals who feel their rights under this provision have been violated can file a charge of discrimination with the General Counsel of the Office of Compliance.

### Key Provisions Under the Law

- # Offices of the Senate and the House of Representatives (including state district offices), joint committees of Congress, the Capitol Police, the Congressional Budget Office, the Architect of the Capitol, the Office of the Attending Physician, the Office of Compliance, and the Capitol Guides Service are required to comply with Section 210's requirements in their dealings with employees and the public.
- # Charges of discrimination must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination.
- # The General Counsel will conduct an investigation after a charge of discrimination is filed, and if a violation has occurred, may either request mediation to resolve the dispute or file a formal complaint with the Office of Compliance.
- # The General Counsel must conduct an inspection of covered Legislative Branch facilities at least once every Congress to determine compliance with the requirements of this section.

### Frequently Asked Questions About Disability Access

***Q. Do these protections apply to visitors, or are only Legislative Branch employees covered?***

**A.** Yes, visitors are also included. Any qualified individual with a disability who visits or is employed by covered entities that provide "public services, programs, or activities" is protected by this provision of the CAA.

***Q. What type of barriers does section 210 of the CAA address?***

**A.** Both physical and communications barriers can prevent participation by a person with disabilities. Lacking ramps to the entrance of a building, for example, poses a physical barrier to

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a wheelchair user attending a committee hearing or visiting a Member's office. Not having printed material in Braille or in other alternative formats poses a communications barrier to a person who is blind or has low vision.

***Q. My office has scheduled a town hall meeting, but the only facility available with adequate space is not accessible to wheelchair users. What can we do?***

**A.** When choosing ways to ensure accessibility to services, priority consideration should be given to providing services in a method that does not segregate people with disabilities. In this example, measures can be taken to make a program available at alternative sites or through alternative means (audio or video tape). Similarly, additional sessions can be held at another location that is accessible to those in wheelchairs.

***Q. Does the Office of Compliance provide consultative advice to employing offices in setting up office space?***

**A.** Yes, on an as-needed basis, employers are welcome to call and request a visit from ADA personnel regarding accessibility issues in the office.

## The Office of Compliance

The Office of Compliance protects the safety, health, and workplace rights of employees of the US Congress and the Legislative Branch. Established by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, the Office is an independent agency which provides an impartial dispute resolution process and educates employees and employing offices about their rights and responsibilities under the Act.

The Office of Compliance welcomes your inquiries. All contacts are kept strictly confidential. If you have any questions regarding access and accommodation for the disabled or any other provision of the Congressional Accountability Act, please feel free to call the office, visit us in person, or view our web site at [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov).

This information does not constitute an official ruling of the Board of Directors and is intended for educational purposes only. For further information, please refer to the Congressional Accountability Act (2 U.S.C 1301 et seq.) and the regulations issued by the Board, or you may contact the Office of Compliance.

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Disability Access and Accommodation Fact Sheet  
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