

PRESS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND FILES COMPLAINT WITH US
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Inaccessible Web Site U.S.A. Learns Discriminates Against the Blind

Baltimore, Maryland (October 27, 2009): The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the nation's oldest and largest organization of blind people and the leading advocate for equal access by the blind to information technology, and Carlos Mora, a blind resident of Baltimore, Maryland, filed an administrative complaint today with the US Department of Education. The complaint asserts that one of the United States Department of Education's Web sites, U.S.A. Learns, violates Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act because it is inaccessible to blind people who use text-to-speech screen access technology or Braille displays to access information on the Internet. Because of the inaccessibility of the U.S.A. Learns Web site, blind people cannot access or navigate through the content of the English vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation lessons that are offered through the site.

Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "In an age where the Internet is a part of everyday life, blind people must have equal access to the information and resources provided on the World Wide Web. In particular, the United States government has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that the information it provides on the Internet is equally accessible to all in America, including the blind. It is especially ironic that the Department of Education, which is commissioned to provide educational opportunities for all, would deny blind people access to a Web site that provides instructive tools for those who speak English as a second language. This is unacceptable and we demand equal access for all blind people."

Carlos Mora, a blind individual from Baltimore, Maryland, said: "I work full time and have been accepted to a master's degree program at Johns Hopkins University, and English is my second language. I attempted to use the U.S.A. Learns Web site to prepare for my everyday life and my future studies by practicing English vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, but the Web site was not accessible to me. It is frustrating to be denied access to any Web site, but it is especially so when I am being denied access to a Web site with educational tools that would help me to become a more active and productive member of American society."

This is the third complaint filed by the National Federation of the Blind on behalf of blind people in America regarding the inaccessibility of a federal government Web site. The NFB plans to file complaints about other inaccessible federal government Web sites as the organization continues to receive multiple reports from blind people of barriers they have faced while trying to access government information, programs, and services on the Internet.

Complainants are represented by attorneys Daniel F. Goldstein and Allison L. Harper of Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP, 120 E. Baltimore Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, (410) 962-1030, fax: (410) 385-0869, dfg@browngold.com, ah@browngold.com, www.browngold.com.

About the National Federation of the Blind

With more than 50,000 members, the National Federation of the Blind is the largest and most influential membership organization of blind people in the United States. The NFB improves blind people's lives through advocacy, education, research, technology, and programs encouraging independence and self-confidence. It is the leading force in the blindness field today and the voice of the nation's blind. In January 2004 the NFB opened the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute, the first research and training center in the United States for the blind led by the blind.