



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Blind Americans Settle Lawsuit against Social Security Administration** *Agency Will Improve Nonvisual Access to Kiosks*

**Baltimore (March 10, 2020):** The National Federation of the Blind, America’s civil rights organization of the blind, and two blind individuals, Lisa Irving and Amy Bonano, have reached a court-ordered settlement of the [lawsuit they filed in 2017](#) against the Social Security Administration (SSA). Under the settlement agreement, the SSA will make improvements to the visitor intake processing kiosks (VIPr kiosks) at its field offices so that blind visitors can use the kiosks privately and independently, without revealing personally identifiable information such as their Social Security numbers to third parties like security guards or other office visitors.

The agreement requires SSA to work with a mutually agreeable third-party kiosk accessibility expert to ensure that the kiosks are redesigned to provide an equal opportunity for blind users. Anticipated modifications include improved Braille and audio instructions and a headphone jack through which audio instructions and information can be spoken to blind users in English or Spanish, with other languages to be added as appropriate and available. Blind users will therefore be able to enter required intake information, including their Social Security number, with complete privacy and independence. The redesigned kiosks will be deployed in field offices throughout the country by December 31, 2021 and, in the interim, SSA will report to NFB every ninety days on the status of the redesign and the expert’s work. The agreement requires SSA to train its personnel on the nonvisual use of its kiosks, regularly test the kiosks to ensure proper functioning, track and monitor accessibility issues related to the kiosks, work collaboratively with NFB on outreach efforts, and report to NFB every six months on these efforts.

“The National Federation of the Blind insists that blind Americans be involved in the implementation of technology that affects our lives, including our ability to access government information and services,” said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. “We are pleased that the terms of this settlement will meaningfully incorporate direction from the blind into the development of improved VIPr kiosks. We hope that other government agencies, businesses, and other entities will take note of this settlement and work with blind Americans as this kind of technology continues to be deployed in locations ranging from retail stores to medical offices.”

“With this settlement, SSA is taking critical steps toward ensuring that blind visitors to SSA offices are afforded the same level of privacy and independence that others have,” said Autumn Elliott, senior counsel at Disability Rights California. “In this day and age, there is no reason that

electronic kiosks or other modern technology should provide people with disabilities with anything less than equal access.”

“Technology should be used as a tool to promote inclusivity. The Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs is proud that, as a result of this settlement, SSA will remove barriers to equitable access for blind visitors,” said Margaret Hart, counsel at Washington Lawyers’ Committee. “We hope that as other public entities implement new technology, they do so with universal access, usability, and individual privacy in mind.”

The legal team in this matter consisted of attorneys from Brown, Goldstein & Levy LLP of Baltimore, Maryland; Disability Rights California; and the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

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### **About the National Federation of the Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), headquartered in Baltimore, is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind Americans. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. The NFB defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality. Learn more about our many programs and initiatives at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org).

### **About Disability Rights California**

Disability Rights California (DRC) is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities. The mission of DRC is to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities. [www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org).

### **About the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs**

Founded in 1968, the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs works to create legal, economic, and social equity through litigation, client and public education, and public policy advocacy. While we fight discrimination against all people, we recognize the central role that current and historic race discrimination plays in sustaining inequity and recognize the critical importance of identifying, exposing, combatting, and dismantling the systems that sustain racial oppression. For more information, please visit <http://www.washlaw.org>, or call 202-319-1000. Follow us on Twitter at @WashLaw4CR.

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