Accessibility Guide

This document is designed to explain to users with disabilities how to use certain features on the Maryland General Assembly website. It also indicates how best to employ screen readers when reading certain areas of the website.

Access Keys

Many areas of the site have been programmed to allow keyboard access. To assist with keyboard access certain pages use Access Keys to interact with textbox and dropdown combo box controls. Access keys are found on the various pages and are announced by screen reading software like JAWS.

Please note that access keys only work in Internet Explorer and only when a control is enabled for that page. If another browser is used it is recommended that the JAWS screen reader be used in lieu of Access keys.

Access Keys on the Home Page:

- ALT + N will give focus to the Find By Number textbox

- ALT + B will give focus to the Find By Broad Subject list

- To skip to the main section it is recommended that you use JAWS to show a list of links.
  To show a list of links use: INSERT + F7.

Access Keys on the Statutes page

- ALT + A will give focus to the Article list. ALT + down arrow will open the list and allow you to select a specific article.

- ALT + S will give focus to the Section list. ALT + down arrow will open the list and allow you to select a specific section.

  Note: This access key only works after an Article has been selected; hence, an article must be selected before a section is selected.

- ALT + T will give focus to the Statute Affected list. ALT + down arrow will open the list and allow you to select a specific article.

- ALT + M will give focus to the Municipal Charters list. ALT + down arrow will open the list and allow you to select a specific charter.

After making a selection from any list, focus is placed on the corresponding navigation action button. Press the enter key to navigate to the selected document or page.

Screen Readers

Screen readers, such as JAWS, may be used to read the site.

PDF Documents

All legislative documents and publications are stored in PDF format. Whenever a PDF document link is clicked, the document will open in whatever viewer the user has set up for PDF documents. If the user has the computer set to open them in Acrobat, then they will open in that application. If the user has them set to open within the browser they will open in either in a new browser tab or a new browser window depending on the user's browser setting.

Additionally, if the screen reader JAWS is used, this application has options that can be set to allow it to read PDF documents or optionally, employ Acrobat to do the reading. Opening PDFs outside of the browser window and directly in the Acrobat application is the preferred method as the reading experience will be better. In Acrobat 9 the setting can be found here: Menu -> Edit -> Preferences -> Internet. Uncheck "Display PDF in browser".

When using JAWS to read long and/or complex documents, those containing a table of contents, indexes, graphics, blank pages and tables, there may be audible delays while JAWS processes these large documents and at times it will stop or pause while reading pages.

Use the following key combinations to read PDF documents effectively:

General JAWS Commands for Using Adobe Reader

Description	Command
JAWS Help for Adobe Reader	Insert+F1
Enter Forms Mode	Enter
Virtual Cursor On	NUM PAD PLUS
Virtual Find	Ctrl+Insert+F
Next Page	Ctrl+Page Down
Previous Page	Ctrl+Page Up
Go To Page	Shift+Ctrl+N
Go To First Page	Shift+Ctrl+Page Up
Go To Last Page	Shift+Ctrl+Page Down
Say All	Insert+Down Arrow
Create Custom Label For Form Field	Ctrl+Insert+Tab

The most effective commands are the following:
- Insert + Down. Ctrl + Page Down
- Down arrow

Certain documents have been set to hide several of the Acrobat toolbars whenever opened. The user can do one of two things to restore them:
- Use the F8 key to restore all hidden toolbars and the menu bar
- Prior to opening the PDF a user can set an application preference in Acrobat to control this behavior. In Adobe 9 this setting is found under Edit -> Preferences -> Documents. Uncheck "Allow documents to hide, menu bar, toolbars, and window controls".

Images

All images have alternative text descriptions except those used to indicate that a document is a PDF document. These images do not convey additional information. These images are added onto the end of links when the link is to a PDF document. Navigation is the same for either the linked phrase or the icon and the resulting display will be the same for either (see above for the various ways a PDF document can be opened).