Connecticut Law Firm Shipman & Goodwin Takes the Lead with ADA-Compliant Website

Shipman & Goodwin LLP, a full-service law firm with offices throughout Connecticut and in Washington, DC, recently made its website content accessible for clients and other visitors who have sight or hearing limitations. This move puts the firm among a small percentage of law firms nationally to have a website in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The firm ranks among the nation's largest law firms on both the *National Law Journal*'s annual NLJ 350 survey and the Law360 400.

Firm leadership identified website accessibility as a priority in response to increased efforts by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure that certain business and organization websites comply with the ADA, which requires that communication from public accommodations and commercial facilities must be accessible and usable to individuals with disabilities. While the broad definition of public accommodations does not include some types of private-sector businesses, recent actions brought by the DOJ signal that it might be prudent for companies such as law firms to make preparations for compliance.

For Shipman & Goodwin, "it wasn't a question of whether or not the firm was required to make the website ADA compliant," said Scott Murphy, the firm's Managing Partner. "It was a natural step to take. Many of our clients either have sight and hearing limitations, or are in the business of helping those who do," he said. All content on Shipman & Goodwin's website is now readable by ADA screen readers that are able to re-represent content to either text to speech, sound icons, or braille output devices. And although the firm recognizes that

many clients and visitors will not be impacted by the change, it was important to provide access to those who do require special assistance.

“As we approach the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act it is great to see a business so thoroughly embrace the principles of accessibility, effective communication and equality in the provision of its services,” said Michelle Duprey, Director, Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities, City of New Haven in Connecticut.

Client of the firm Jeff Bravin, Executive Director of the American School for the Deaf (ASD), agrees, and wishes more people would take the initiative to make their websites ADA compliant. “For nearly 200 years, ASD has strived to provide accessibility to information for our students and clients. We need more people to help level the playing field for people of all abilities,” he said.

“Every little step makes our community a better place,” added Ms. Duprey.

Shipman & Goodwin LLP is a full-service law firm with more than 160 attorneys and offices in Hartford, Stamford, Greenwich and Lakeville, Conn. and in Washington, DC. Founded in 1919, the firm serves the needs of local, regional, national and international clients, which include public and private companies, institutions, government entities and non-profit organizations. The firm also actively supports pro bono service and community involvement on both a firm-wide basis and among attorneys at all levels. For more information, visit www.shipmangoodwin.com.