

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Joint Board Of Elections Says No To U.S. D.O.J.'s Disabilities Act Settlement Agreement

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ST. CROIX -- The Joint Board of Elections in a 8-2 vote on Wednesday decided to reject the U.S. Department of Justice's call for a settlement agreement regarding Americans with Disabilities compliance issues at polling locations.

In September, 2012, U.S. D.O.J. surveyed all 31 polling places in the territory, and reviewed 29 of the same locations during the November 2012 General Election. In October, 2014, the department concluded that most polling locations in the territory included barriers to access for persons with disabilities, and thus the Virgin Islands violated law by failing to select facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities on election day.

The U.S. D.O.J. requested that the following measures be implemented before election day:

- Portable ramps (including curb ramps) up to and including ramps six feet long, with side edge protection
- Portable wedges or wedge ramps
- Floor mats
- Traffic cones
- Relocating furniture or other moveable barriers
- Door stops
- propping open doors
- Unlocking doors

At at Joint Board [meeting last month](#), some members argued appealing the U.S. D.O.J.'s findings, and a motion to do so failed. Board member Lisa Harris-Moorhead said it was not wise to go head-to-head with the U.S. D.O.J., and suggested that an extension be requested to give the board enough time — July 13 — to come into compliance. That motion passed.

But yesterday board members said D.O.J.'s settlement only called for minor changes, which they believe could be arranged before election day.