

VOTING SUCCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Election season is a great time to exercise our voting rights. As such a basic part of citizenship, limited access or unfit accommodations must not hinder people with disabilities the right to vote. Fortunately, laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the National Voter Registration Act, and the 2002's Help America Vote Act (HAVA) have set standardized guidelines for voting accessibility.

As a voter with disabilities, you have rights to have access to resources to ensure that you are able to contribute your vote. The following is a brief guide that could be helpful as you go through the voting process.

Voter Registration

Registration is the crucial first step in the voting process, because completing this step will provide you with your polling place location. Registration materials are available online from your state's Division of Elections (www.eac.gov/voter_resources/contact_your_state.aspx). However, if you have difficulty filling out and receiving your registration, the following state agencies can assist you. You should contact the office that provides services for your type of disability. For example, if you are blind, you should call your state's Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired for registration assistance.

- Department of Health
 - Department of Social Services
 - Department of Mental Health
 - Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
 - Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
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Additionally, county government offices can also provide support in the registration process. Using local services can be quite beneficial, as office representatives generally have more in-depth information about the accessibility of individual polling places.

Pre-Election Day Preparation

Once you have received your voting registration card and polling location (i.e., where you will vote if doing it in person), take a few extra measures to ensure your voting process runs smoothly.

Know What Identification You Need

For most states, at least one form of voter identification (ID) will be required to cast a vote. Typically, this documentation is either in a photo ID form (e.g., driver's license, US passport, etc.) or a non-photo ID form (e.g., recent paycheck stub, utility bill, etc.). Acceptable forms of voter ID vary in each state. A quick way to check your state's basic requested form(s) is to browse the Voter ID Requirements Map hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx#Two). If you cannot supply any of these forms of identification, you must contact your state's Division of Elections to verify what kind of documentation to bring to the polling center.

Know Your Options

There are various types of polling assistive technologies (AT). Below are some examples to give you an idea of what is available on the market.

- **Voting Booth Accessories:** These items are equipment designed for use in a voting booth to accommodate a voter with varying disabilities. An example is an AirVoter (bit.ly/1Sj2e6h). AirVoters are a pneumatic (sip and puff) control that allow users to activate a voting machine by inhaling or exhaling. Another example of booth accessory is a Leg Adapter Kit (bit.ly/1qCZqJT). This kit allows traditional voting booth legs to be altered, letting those with wheelchairs sit comfortably next to the booth.
- **Voice Output Voting Machines:** For those who are blind or have low vision, Voice Output Voting Machines provide audio, as well as a touch-based interface to assist with voting. The AccuVote (bit.ly/1Sj2Skd) and Automark (bit.ly/1NzOLoC) machines both provide this feature.
- **Voter Assistance Call Signals:** These signals are typically placed in a polling place parking lot. BallotCall (bit.ly/20US15E) is a voting assistance button that allows voters to notify polling center personnel if they need help getting into the polling place, or if they wish to fill out a curbside ballot.

Helpful Resource

Some states maintain Disability Vote Coalitions (www.aapd.com/our-focus/voting), operated by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). These coalitions provide voting and registration education services.

Visit AbleData for more types of AT (bit.ly/1SrITmN) for voting.

Many organizations host “voting roadshows” that may help you find out about types of AT available in your area. These roadshows provide you the opportunity to practice voting on various machines and ask questions of local polling center personnel. Contact your local government to see if a “voting roadshow” is available in your area. Availability of AT at polling locations varies greatly. To find out what your specific polling location offers, you can contact them prior to Election Day to discuss their accessibility features, any accommodations or AT they provide, and any of your own AT you wish to use to vote.

Election Day

Election Day can be exciting—but it can also be a time-consuming and crowded event. Use the following checklist to make sure your voting process runs smoothly:

- Bring your voter registration card.
- Have your state’s required identification.
- Bring any of your own AT to assist you with checking in to the polling place and voting.
- Arrive during non-peak hours. If possible avoid 6 a.m. – 9 p.m. and 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. when the polls are most populated.

Be sure to inform the person who is checking you in if you need assistance. It is their duty to accommodate to all voters.

Also, if you travel to the polling place and for some reason you are unable to vote inside, take advantage of curbside voting. Simply call the polling center, or use a Voter Assistance Call Signal if available, and a polling official will bring a ballot to your car.

Alternative Voting Methods

While there are many options for you to cast your vote on Election Day, you may still decide to choose an alternative form of voting. Two of the most common forms include early voting and using an absentee ballot. Early voting is when an individual is able to go to a specialized polling center a day in advance to cast their vote. Absentee voting occurs when an individual requests a ballot well in advance of Election Day, after they specify why they cannot cast their vote on the set voting day. Keep in mind that you must request these alternatives through your local government, and each state regulates the processes differently. Utilize the NCSL’s Absentee and Early Voting Map (www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx) to see what your state requires.

Nation-wide Voting Differences

As noted throughout this guide, voting rules and regulations vary from state to state. Prior to Election Day, familiarize yourself with your area's regulations on voting with disabilities by visiting Disability.gov (www.disability.gov/?s=voting&submit) and selecting your state. General state voting information can also be found on the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) Contact Map (www.eac.gov/voter_resources/contact_your_state.aspx).

For More Information

Visit us at AbleData, at <https://abledata.acl.gov/>.

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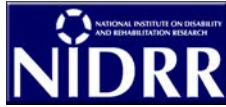
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