

Voting Accessibility Barriers

Survey State AT Program & Protection & Advocacy networks -- N = 76, 24 states, 2 territories & 2 national organizations (HAVA Section 291 grantees) plus webinar discussion – 82 participants

Critical access barriers to private and independent voting in rank order –

1. AVS not set up and ready to use; no one knows how to set up and operate.

- Uniform user interface

2. Remote/absentee voting no accessible option; only hand marked paper ballot.

- * Accessible online ballot marking, online voting



3. Voter education materials not accessible; cannot be prepared to vote.

- * Web accessibility and alternative format materials

4. Online voter registration not accessible.

- * Accessible forms and online applications

5. AVS does not have access features for complex disabilities, e.g. eye gaze, refreshable braille.

- * Voting using own technology and AT

6. AVS unfamiliar, complex; no time to learn to use.

- * Available to community; voting using own tech and AT.

7. AVS not portable cannot support curbside voting.

- * Polling place access; portable AVS; online voting.



Open Comment Themes

Until all voters use similar/same systems accessibility will continue to be elusive --

- *Polling place staff being unfamiliar with the accessible voting machine is a critical issue and recurs frequently and regularly. This is in large part because voters needing accessible voting use a separate and clearly unequal form of voting than voters who can hand mark a paper ballot. Only when EVERYONE must use the same and accessible machine is this likely to change.*
- *The ideal system is when everyone uses the same system to mark and cast their ballot. The return to hand marked paper ballots is a huge step backward from the ideal. When voters with disabilities are the only voters who use a ballot marking device and it produces a different size and content ballot from the hand marked one the secrecy of the ballots cast by voters with disabilities is seriously jeopardized.*



Still have inaccessible polling places --

- *All too often polling places are in older inaccessible buildings. Some of the physical access barriers contained include ramps that are too steep, the only accessible entrance may be a side or rear entrance used mainly for maintenance, and parking lots that are not paved with no clear path of travel to enter the polling place.*

Online voting is desirable solution --

- *Online voting would solve most issues; individuals would use their own assistive technology (AT) from home to vote eliminating transportation barriers, inaccessible polling place problems and inaccessible voting machine issues.*

Frustration with access barriers decades after ADA/HAVA ensured voting access –

- *The inability to easily access the polling place, alternative formats and accessible voting systems would not be tolerated for any other voter. People with disabilities should have equal access on par with any other voter. Any barrier created by the lack of accessible features should not just be a public policy issue, it should be a crime.*



VVSG – TGDC Implications

New VVSG should consider --

Uniform user interface instead of “separate” AVS

Remote Voting/Vote by Mail accessibility

Online Voting - all phases of voting

AVS portability

If online voter registration and education materials are out of scope, can anything be done to support accessibility and prevent litigation?

Polling place accessibility seems out of scope, but creates increased need for VVSG to address remote voting.

