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General Comment

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council empowers people with disabilities to share their voice. We encourage all to be involved in their communities where they live, work and play. Iowans with disabilities face barriers to exercise their right to vote.

What barriers do people with disabilities encounter while voting in America?

Iowans with disabilities face many obstacles in casting their vote. They face barriers such as transportation – simply getting a ride to the polling site, sufficiently trained staff to run adaptable voting equipment, polling sites trained to effectively offer the use of curbside voting, and when voting remotely/by mail – accessing accessible tools, like a screen reader for someone with visual impairment. Another significant barrier is understanding the voting process in a way that promotes civic engagement, often current laws are intimidating and provide unnecessary restrictions. One rule limits the use of satellite sites for voting. Satellite sites allow for voting at flexible times and locations (ones on a bus route or in varied locations). Finally one of the newest barriers and one that could prove to be the most difficult, asking for help while voting. New laws are very prescriptive on who can help/provide assistance. People with disabilities often rely on assistance, often every day for multiple reasons, and certainly for voting. Not all of their caregivers fall into simple categories, such as family or paid caregiver. The new law Iowa will discourage people willing to assist, by requiring them to register to assist and also people could face legal issues if not done correctly. Limiting who can provide assistance is a big and unnecessary barrier.

What systems/processes enable voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently in the United States?

Here is a list of some key systems/process that allows Iowans with disabilities to vote; vote by mail, extended dates from the time one requests ballots to deadline to be mailed in and submitted, satellite voting sites, drive through drop off satellite sites, accessible voting machines, trained staff to assist voters,

curb side voting and systems that allow needed individualized assistance. (peoples disabilities vary, systems and procuresses need to flexible to be truly individualized)

How can the United States improve voter access for people with disabilities?

Voting is a right and should be made accessible and attainable to all citizens. Voting can be made available by innovative, usable and accessible tools that make voting easier to people living with disabilities. We believe great lengthened time frames are necessary, well trained polling staff that are available, curbside and satellite sites, and that the physical sites are actually accessible (e.g. for people using wheelchairs, those with visual impairments etc.). Also voting should be consistent state by state, and county by county. We understand that each district has individual intricacies that sometimes can be confusing.