

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As of: 7/17/21 9:01 AM
Received: July 16, 2021
Status: Pending_Post
Tracking No. kr6-tlv-g-coqq
Comments Due: July 16, 2021
Submission Type: Web

Docket: NIST-2021-0003
RFI: Promoting Access to Voting

Comment On: NIST-2021-0003-0001
Promoting Access To Voting

Document: NIST-2021-0003-DRAFT-0151
Comment on FR Doc # 2021-12619

Submitter Information

Government Agency Type: Federal
Government Agency: EAC

General Comment

3. Voters face a variety of barriers when attempting to access useful information about items on the ballot. Voters that are low vision the size of the font on the ballot may prevent voters from accessing useful information. Readability is a barrier for multiple disabilities including intellectual and developmental disabilities. Readability in this context refers to the difficulty of the text based on number of syllables, words, and sentences in a text. According to a study by Shauna Reilly and Sean Richey more voters skipped voting on ballot measure when the titles and summaries were harder to read. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires federal agencies to communicate in a way that can be understood and used by the public. Guidelines for readability suggest aiming for an eight-grade reading level, and according to a Reilly and Riche study in 2018 ballot questions required an average of between 19 to 20 years of formal education to read and comprehend.

13. Voters in states that do not automatically send registered voters ballots in the mail, may encounter barriers requesting their ballot. Mail ballot request forms that are paper are inaccessible to voters with low vision and certain monitor coordination disabilities. Electronic request forms are not without their own difficulties. Websites may not have the accessibility features required for a disabled voter to request their ballot independently. Paper mail ballots that are unavailable in alternative styles such as large font or braille are inaccessible to low vision voters. Completing a paper mail ballot can be inaccessible due to the physical requirements of handling the ballot and the envelope. Returning the ballot has proven to be barrier to voters. For electronic ballots voters may not have personal access to printers but the large barrier was the distance to mailboxes, post offices, or ballot drop-boxes. Voters may also have physical accessibility barriers at older post offices or obstructions to ballot drop box locations.

17. Poll worker trainings should focus on the entirety of the voting experience for people with disabilities. Ensuring the physical accessibility of a polling place is only one part of the voting process. Poll workers could benefit from disability awareness and etiquette training to reduce stigma and increase positive interactions between poll workers and voters. The Accessible Polling Place Location and Equipment (APPLE) class conducted by the Contra Costa County Elections Division, is a good example of a training that addresses barriers experienced by people with disabilities. The training focuses on creating a

welcoming environment for all voters; utilization of the accessible voting machine for voters with and without disabilities; surveying for compliance with federal accessibility standards; using items, such as ramps and signs, to make the path of travel to the polling place accessible; and ensuring that the polling place remains accessible throughout Election Day . Such a comprehensive approach to poll worker training addresses barriers to the physical environment and the voting process.