

HAVAccess

The election reform resource to help you address polling place access



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Access Through Holidays and Into 2007

HAVAccess is Inclusion Solutions' free newsletter to help election officials implement the disability access provisions of the Help America Vote Act. Please call 1-866-232-5487 to discuss accessibility in your jurisdiction.

Congratulations to everyone for completing the November election. This issue of HAVAccess touches upon what happened, what's next, and with no election pending, will make a one-time deviation into other accessibility issues.

Paper Trails and Accessibility

The unresolved issue of a voter verified paper trail also implicates accessibility. Some advocates have worried that a verifiable paper trail may destroy the privacy for blind and low vision voters that HAVA's voting machine requirements have finally put in place. Others have wondered how to make these printed paper trails accessible. And still another concern is whether adding a paper printer may make voting machines so cumbersome that they no longer can be brought out to a voter requiring curbside assistance. Officials should be certain that if their state does require a paper trail, that it does not undermine accessibility.

Funding in 2007

2007 funding for the HHS/EAID program is crucial to ensure that access to elections continues to improve as well as to fund protection and advocacy efforts on accessible elections. Funding remains likely under bill [HR 5647, the Departments of Labor, Health, Human Services and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act](#) which provides that "\$15,720,000 shall be for activities authorized by the Help America Vote Act of 2002, of which \$10,890,000 shall be for payments to States to promote access for voters with disabilities, and of which \$4,830,000 shall be for payments to States for protection and advocacy systems for voters with disabilities..." (In order to locate the actual legislation - click on the text of the legislation and look under "children and families services programs").

Although Congress will be shifting to Democratic control, it is unlikely that these provisions assisting election officials and voters with disabilities would be removed. And, compared to some of the other extraordinary budget amounts in other areas, this amount of less than \$16 million nationally to ensure continued access is crucial. Local officials and advocates should continue to let Congress know that these budgetary amounts are essential both in 2007 and beyond.

Other Developments on Access.

Massachusetts: [United States Department of Justice Investigating Massachusetts for Lack of Access for Disabled Voters](#)

Pennsylvania: [Group pushes for handicap poll access](#). See Also: [Access Undeniable at Most County Polling Places](#)

Washington D.C.: [Technology Allows for Independent Voting](#).

Indiana: [Indiana Protection and Advocacy Information on Access](#)

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From My Perspective...

by Carey Siegel

Carey Siegel works with Inclusion Solutions and focuses on making drive throughs accessible for customers who are deaf/hoh. But Carey also wanted to share his thoughts on voting as an individual who is moatly deaf.

Voting can be a frustrating experience for me. I enjoy doing it and take pride in showing up at my polling place and casting my ballot on election day like everyone else. But sometimes things don't work out.

Because I work a 9 to 5 job, I, like many voters, normally go to the polls either early before work or late in the day. But when it's crowded, it becomes particularly difficult for me as a person who is almost completely deaf. Unfortunately, many times pollworkers don't realize that I cannot hear what they are asking. Sometimes they are rude and impatient with me as they are overwhelmed with the crowd and the procedures and sometimes they don't even realize my communication barrier. I've been screamed at to "sign this" or do this and that. Yelling louder doesn't help me.

I realize that getting American Sign Language interpreters at every polling place isn't realistic. But there are lots of simple things that can be done to make communication at the polling place easier for me and voters like me.

First, I'd like to see every polling place provided with a simple sheet that explains to pollworkers how to communicate with a voter who is deaf or hard of hearing. And I'd like this sheet to have on it common questions asked by the election official so they can just point to them. I'd also like written information for me explaining the procedures to me. With such a sheet, the line will move smoother and more efficiently. Also for the future elections deaf people will be more prepared.

Oh, and having pencil and paper handy to write out questions also makes all of the difference in

[to Voting.](#)

California: [Secretary of State Guide for Voters With Disabilities.](#)

State Status Report and Improved Access

Now that the 2006 Mid-term elections are completed, many election officials are wondering "what's next". While accessibility remains an important issue nationwide, states are in many different positions following election day -- but continued improvements remain important across the board.

States fall into three main categories with respect to polling place access and making elections accessible to voters with disabilities.

States Still Focusing on Access to Polling Sites

Several states are looking toward 2007 as an important year to address polling place accessibility issues as they have not done so to date.

For example, New York's challenges with respect to HAVA and accessibility are well documented. New York will be moving to more countywide implementation of accessible voting machines. And New York Counties are just now starting to address polling place accessibility. But New York has several advantages. First, the state can learn from "best practices" in other states. Second, the state has done a great job funding accessibility -- between HAVA and state funds, there is over \$7 million available to ensure that polling sites become accessible to voters with disabilities.

Other states looking to make site access a priority in 2007 include Texas, which has set forth a distribution plan for access funding. Also turning their attention to this are several of the Southern states where reform was slowed by Hurricane Katrina. Only now can these states turn back towards physical accessibility.

"Mixed Bag" States

A second group of states is still in the middle of physical accessibility improvements -- some counties have addressed these issues completely while others are making it a priority in 2007. For example in Ohio, dozens of counties made this a priority in 2006 and implemented significant changes. But other counties, without the resources or the time, are just now looking to make permanent and temporary site improvements to their locations.

Pennsylvania and California are two other

the world. It is the most effective communication tool -- in this age of high tech voting machines this old fashioned method is always reliable.

This doesn't just apply at the polling place. I'm amazed with millions of deaf and hard of hearing Americans that more candidates don't bother to closed caption their political advertisements or have American Sign Language Interpreters at their events. If you want my vote, let me know why!

I understand that election day can be a confusing event at the polling place. But with written materials, pen and paper, and some common courtesey, it can be made easily accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing.



Happy Holidays from Inclusion Solutions

Inclusion Solutions carries over [130 products](#) to solve polling place access issues and is the nation's leader on this part of HAVA.

Inclusion Solutions is the nation's leader on election access. We have now worked with officials in 51 states and territories and we continue to come up with even more solutions. We are *the only vendor in this area with attorneys, ADA experts, and people with disabilities on staff to ensure dignified solutions.*

Unsure about what to do with unpaved lots? [Matting Comparison Sheet for BallotDeck, VersaMat \(Hard Matting\), or Mobi-Mat \(Superlight mesh matting\).](#)

[New Products](#) to make your elections even more accessible include:

Cone Top Signs These signs stick right into existing cones. Parking, directional, poll distance, and even general election day signs available.

Paint Stripers to Paint Parking lots
Temporary and permanent paint available.

similarly situated states where some counties focused on this issue in 2006 and others are now turning their attention to it.

Early Access Leaders and Next Steps

Finally, there are a number of states that were early adopters on polling place accessibility between 2004 and 2006. In these states, most locations have already been made accessible. In some cases, such as Nevada, Oklahoma, and Indiana, state election departments purchased accessibility improvements directly and spearheaded efforts. In other states such as North Carolina and Illinois, counties determined their own needs and made significant changes.

While most of these states have largely completed physical access changes, they have not stopped focusing on access. For example, [Equip for Equality](#), the Illinois Protection and Advocacy agency went out to over 1,500 polling places in Chicago to follow up on Chicago's leading accessibility initiatives.

Other early adopter states have turned to other access initiatives such as improved sensitivity training; supplemental solutions such as outfitting each polling location with ADA-compliant voting booths; providing auxiliary aid products such as magnifiers, signature guides, and deaf communication tools; or providing materials in alternative format. With additional HHS funding expected, these leading states have an opportunity to remain on the cutting edge of accessibility improvements.

And remember that wherever your jurisdiction is with respect to access, remember that ADA standards are minimums -- there is always more that can be done through additional signage, improved doors, supplemental solutions and more. HAVA has provided an unprecedented opportunity to improve election accessibility, and whether a county is still working on physical access or moving to these next steps, access to the electoral process for voters with disabilities is an ongoing obligation.

Detour: Drive Thru and Gas Station Access

Detour: Gas Station and Drive Thru Accessibility

HAVAcess normally focuses exclusively on the area of election accessibility. As you approach the holiday season and have just completed an election, we thought we'd deviate for one time only to talk about some of the other areas of accessibility that Inclusion Solutions is focused on -- gas stations, drive throughs and small businesses.

Gas Station Access

Service station accessibility is a major concern for drivers with

[Lighter and Stronger Ramps](#) with non-slip surfaces and other improvements.

[Offset Door Hinges](#) to increase the clear space of narrow doors.

Restroom Solutions including signs closing restrooms, grab bars, and more

Voting Machine Sanitary Headphone Covers. Consider at least 10 disposable headcovers for each of your ADA-compliant voting machines. [Page 14](#)

[Full Color Reference Materials](#) with tips for surveying and improving access, information on interacting with voters with disabilities, and sign language communication tips.

Free Help Going Through Survey Results. Call us toll free -- we have analyzed survey results and come up with non-binding proposals for hundreds of jurisdictions nationwide.

Other Materials

[Braille and Alternative Format Voting Information.](#)
[1:12 Ramp Chart.](#)

We carry solutions for all accessibility issues in your polling places from parking lots, to steps, to door hardware, to inside of the polling place.

All our [products](#) are portable and owned by you, the election official, and are consistent with Section 261 of HAVA.

Call us toll free at 1-866-232-5487, or Email elections@inclusionsolutions.com

Free CD Rom with Power Point Training on Accessibility

Call 1-866-232-5487, or Email ordercdrom@inclusionsolutions.com

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[PAST HAVACCESS ISSUES AVAILABLE ONLINE](#)

For past issues with operating links, text only versions, or recent issues, please email backissues@inclusionsolutions.com or call us toll free at 1-866-232-5487.

[Election Systems and Software](#) customer? You can purchase Inclusion Solutions' products directly from your ES&S representatives. Please call them for details. Also visit our distributor [Printelect](#)

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2007 HAVA and Beyond

disabilities. As the world has moved to a self-service model, the people who have lost out are drivers with disabilities who cannot pump their own gas. Gas stations normally have pumps, card readers, and or buttons that are too high for individuals with disabilities to reach.

Federal regulation has attempted to address the issue. [Federal policy](#) requires that service stations pump gas for drivers with disabilities at the self service price whenever more than one employee is on duty.

But drivers normally have been unable to tell employees that they require assistance. Many stations tell drivers to honk their horns for assistance, but this normally brings puzzled stares or is ignored. And drivers do not normally know when this service is being provided. The result has been uncertainty, frustrated drivers, and nationwide litigation.

Inclusion Solutions has developed the FuelCall system. FuelCall consists of call buttons mounted at ADA-appropriate height as well as signage. Similar in concept to the BallotCall system, FuelCall allows the driver a dignified means to request assistance with refueling. Stations nationwide, including the entire [Florida Turnpike](#) are starting to adopt this innovative answer to the problem of refueling assistance.

Drive Thrus

Another concern is drive thru (or "Drive Through") restaurants for individuals who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. For individuals who cannot hear, it is impossible to use the drive up. Making the problem worse is the fact that some restaurants keep the drive through open later than the interior location. Thus deaf/hard of hearing patrons are unable to use these late night facilities – a possible violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act. And current solutions, such as electronic ordering systems are costly and do not solve the issue. [Nation's Restaurant News ran an article](#) on the issue.

Inclusion Solutions works with restaurants on drive thru assistance with our OrderAssist product. OrderAssist consists of a call button mounted at the order window. If a customer cannot use the speaker system, he/she pushes the button to notify the employee and then pulls ahead to the pick up window. At that window the employee has a pad and paper and other written materials to allow effective communication.

Retail/Small Businesses

Finally, we work with business owners of all sizes to provide many of the same accessibility solutions that we provide pollworkers. Our BigBell is in place in thousands of locations nationwide including mom and pop stores and large corporate and franchised locations. And for locations with small steps, BigBell plus a portable ramp has increased access at many businesses.

Inclusion Solutions' goal in these areas is the same as in elections – to create solutions consistent with the original intent of the ADA – dignified access for individuals with disabilities without imposing unreasonable burdens on decision makers. And although these issues are removed from elections, please feel free to pass them on to advocates and others in your community for whom these are important concerns.

Check out the [FuelCall Information Sheet](#) and [OrderAssist Information Sheet](#) to learn more. Or you can watch a [web-based video on refueling assistance](#).