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Subject: Polling Place Access (March 2009) (Not Spam)

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HAVAccess

The election reform resource to help you address polling place access

 inclusion-solutions

Inclusion Solutions
2009 Catalog Preview:
All New!

HAVAccess is [Inclusion Solutions'](#) free newsletter to help election officials in the United States and abroad ensure access for voters with disabilities under the Help America Vote Act and/or other laws. Please call 1-866-232-5487 to discuss accessibility in your jurisdiction.

New President, New Initiatives and New Funding?

With President Barack Obama now in office and the current economic climate being a source of concern for all Americans, the issues of election reform and accessible voting still remains a central one. With a new administration and the presidential election behind, 2009 is a great opportunity for election administrators to investigate new advances in elections and implement the next generation of election administration improvements.

States are making legislative efforts to determine what the next generation of elections will look like. In some states, such as Washington, Alabama, Indiana, and Colorado, pending election reform legislation may authorize the next generation of accessible voting online. And other states, such as New Jersey, have decided not to purchase paper trail audit systems based upon financial crunches and questions about the necessity of such records.

Accessibility to elections is certain to heat up as a federal issue in 2009. Much of HAVA's initial polling place access push was as a result of the 2002 U.S. General Accounting Office report "[VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES: Access to Polling Places and Alternative Voting Methods](#)," which outlines significant national accessibility problems.

The GAO conducted a follow-up survey of polling places for accessibility during the 2008 presidential election -- the results will be released later in 2009. This information will demonstrate where improvements have been made nationally and where changes still are required. Stay tuned.

Despite this renewed interest, federal funding for accessible elections remains somewhat unsettled. House Appropriations Bill H.R. 1105 included in its stimulus package \$100 million to continue to fund HAVA as well as "\$17,410,000...for activities authorized by the Help America Vote Act of 2002, of which \$12,154,000 shall be for payments to States to promote access for voters with disabilities, and of which \$5,256,000 shall be for payments to States for protection and advocacy systems for voters with disabilities." [Click here for the appropriations bill -- see page 62 for the relevant HAVA provisions.](#)

Hopefully, the Senate budget will contain similar appropriations and will not require a House-Senate compromise. Arguably few federal initiatives are more important than ensuring that all Americans can vote in an accessible manner. Compared to some items in the stimulus package and the billions of dollars in new spending, it is more than reasonable to invest this amount in the accessibility of the electoral process and the Protection and Advocacy agencies that safeguard these rights. Election administrators and advocates alike should talk with their Senate members to ensure that the House funding levels are confirmed in the final budget.

State-Specific Accessibility Materials:

Michigan: [State Accessibility Grant Materials \(May 1 Deadline\)](#);

South Carolina: [Reprint of State HAVA Grant Letter \(unofficial\)](#); [Customizable Access Proposal for Submission to State \(IS document\)](#); [South Carolina Curbside Signage \(IS document\)](#);

Wisconsin: [Detailed State Accessibility Materials Including 2009 Access Survey, Information, Appendix and More](#);

Florida: [Grant Proposal Form \(IS document\)](#); Alabama: [2008 Grant Materials](#); California: [Vote Grant Program RFA](#); Colorado: [HAVA and Voters With Disabilities FAQ](#); Texas: [HAVA Memo \(unofficial\)](#); Ohio: [Level Landing Worksheet \(IS document\)](#).

Other states with active grant programs where election administrators may have access to funding to make polling places accessible include Ohio, New Jersey, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania. Be sure to check with your own state for official information -- with continued funding, grant programs that are now closed may reopen in the future.

Other Articles on Access:

Ohio: [New Polling Stations Needed for Columbus](#); [Some Polling Places May Be Consolidated to Accommodate Handicapped Voters](#)

Montana: [Montana Secretary of State Opposes Move to Local Authority Over Accessible Voting](#)

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From My Perspective...

by Kern Walden

Kern Walden is an aspiring student, writer, and painter from Lake County, Illinois. In 2004 he received a 2 computer graphic design/desktop publishing degree from Woodrow Wilson Educational Center and he is currently enrolled at the College of Lake County. He is active in many accessibility initiatives including <http://www.disabilitygas.com> and is developing Active Aided Lifestyles which promotes awareness and educates people with disabilities as to how to live independently and actively in their own lives. He can be reached by email at onetoughquad@yahoo.com and has invited advocates and election officials to share their story with him

My name is Kern Walden, and I use a wheelchair due to a motor vehicle accident which occurred in 2000, and has left me a C7 Incomplete Quadriplegic. I am a high level functioning individual who has used leg braces and a walker to walk in therapies and for exercise, as well as all sorts of other adaptive devices such as bicycles, race chairs, and a power wheelchair due to an adaptive mountain climbing injury in which I tore my left bicep from the shoulder.

I drove a car primarily every day for the purpose of physical therapy, schooling, and exercise/recreational purposes, as well as the every day grocery shopping and errand running which we all do for about 5 years. I was able to transfer in and out of my Ford Taurus and disassemble and reassemble my wheelchair at every stop I made.

Sometimes due to weather, or illness, or fatigue, or just plain old schedule conflicting can make it very hard to participate in normal/every day activities for people, like myself, with a disability of some sort. One of the good things about being in a wheelchair is the fact that it truly does have its perks at times. We get to park closer than most people, I usually never have to wait in line at a club, restaurant, sporting event, I could go on; but if I let all of our trade secrets out we might get treated like crap, like everyone else in the world. Who wants that? Anyways, my friends and I call the special treatment we get, VIP! Yep, that's it; simply VIP! VIP parking. VIP entrance. VIP service! You know.