

hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com

From: Inclusion Solutions (Hollister Bundy) [hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com]
Sent: Monday, March 08, 2004 1:33 PM
To: hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com
Subject: Polling Place Access (March HAVAccess)

March 2004

Vol. II No. 2



Catalog of Access Solutions

Accessible Polling Places

HAVAccess, is Inclusion Solutions' free newsletter to help election officials implement the disability access provisions of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

FUNDING -- Access Monies Coming, But Diminished

Even though Congress allocated \$1.5 billion more for HAVA in January, funding of the access provisions of HAVA remains inadequate. Tentative appropriations for the Section 261 access provisions of HAVA in 2004 is \$10 million -- reduced from the \$25 million originally authorized. Thus to date, funding for accessibility of polling places under HAVA in its first two years will be only \$23 million out of the \$75 million intended under the law. These portions of HAVA (along with payments to Protection and Advocacy Agencies) have been particularly poorly funded.

There are solutions, however. While these HHS monies *must* be used for polling place accessibility (and training), other HAVA funds - including amounts out of this new \$1.5 billion *may* also be used for accessibility. Several states, such as New York (\$10,000,000) North Carolina (almost \$800,000) and Georgia (\$700,000) have earmarked general HAVA payments from their state fund for polling place accessibility, above and beyond HHS grants. It is very difficult for local election officials to make changes absent funding. Election officials and advocates are encouraged to follow the leads of these states and talk with state officials about using some of the other HAVA funding for the crucial area of polling place accessibility.

Newsbriefs

[Department of Justice Releases ADA Checklist for Polling Places](#)

[Arizona Secretary of State Gives Out First Access Grants](#)

[HAVA Sponsors' Letter Opposing Voter-Verified Paper Trails as Detrimental to Accessibility Provisions](#)

2004 Elections and Access Initiatives

Several states have taken proactive and leading steps on addressing polling place accessibility within the last few months. Below are summaries of three states with

Contents

2004 Elections and Access Initiatives

From My Perspective

Surveying Polling Places Part I: Whowhatwhenwherewhyhow?

From My Perspective...

Bill Thompson is the Assistant Director of Elections in Pike County, Ohio and is also a member of the Ohio Accessibility Group.

Like many of you, I'm an election official. I help plan and administer elections, generate documents, and probably do many of the same day-to-day activities as all of us. Like many of you, I worry about inaccessible polling places and budget shortfalls. But I have another perspective on access: I also use a wheelchair.

Pike County is a rural county in South Central Ohio with about 18,000 voters and 29 polling sites. Being a rural county, we constantly face financial crunches and are often challenged to get enough people involved in the process.

While most of our sites are accessible to voters with disabilities to a degree, we have our problems. We don't have an

innovative agendas.

New Jersey

New Jersey gets particularly high marks for addressing polling place accessibility initiatives. State director of elections Ramon DeLaCruz created a day dedicated to the issue, a "Polling Place Accessibility Workshop" on February 22nd in Trenton.

The workshop brought in local directors of elections from throughout New Jersey to learn about the issue. DeLaCruz also created a blue-ribbon panel of authorities from throughout the state and beyond to discuss the issue. Among those who presented were state advocates for people with disabilities, United States Department of Justice Officials, and representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The day-long seminar included presentations from these officials, distribution of a booklet outlining all of the applicable New Jersey regulations concerning polling place accessibility, and implementation of a plan by which all New Jersey counties will resurvey and report on polling place accessibility by May 15, 2004, with a goal towards making accessibility improvements prior to subsequent elections.

Arkansas

Arkansas was one of the first states nationally to survey polling places -- doing so back in the early 1990s. Arkansas is once again an early leader on moving forward on polling place accessibility issues.

Secretary of State Charlie Daniels sent a letter out to Arkansas Counties discussing polling place accessibility and providing the counties with grant application forms to apply for a portion of Arkansas HHS HAVA funding. The deadline for these applications is March 19th: Ideally Arkansas election officials will be able to start using the funds to make access improvements prior to the May 18th primary.

One other interesting provision of the Arkansas initiative is that the state has prohibited these public funds from being used on private facilities. Thus for any polling place in a private location, the funds can only be used for temporary polling place access improvements that are owned by the election officials and removed after election day.

Minnesota

Minnesota has also moved forward with surveys and accessibility grant provisions for voters with disabilities. In fact, Minnesota Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer has created a dedicated website for the access grants.

unlimited number of choices for polling sites. And we have a major problem that many city election officials don't have - unpaved parking lots. Gravel or mud in the lot stops a wheelchair in its tracks - even if the rest of the building is accessible. I would estimate that about half of our polling places have this parking lot problem.

Just like many of you, we are going to have issues any time we try to change polling sites. And paving lots is hard: We can't just be dumping what little money we have into the hands of outsiders to fix their problems when we don't even know if they will let us continue to use their building. And it's not worth spending money on accessible bathrooms when voters can't even get into some sites. We have to spend selectively.

I've been fortunate to have been asked by State Election Reform Director Dana Walch to be on the State of Ohio HAVA committee on accessibility? we are working hard to come up with solutions that will work for all of the state. Sometimes I'm frustrated though - a few voters claimed that our committee is just comprised of government employees and doesn't understand the rights of voters with disabilities. Believe me, we and I do.

In a perfect world, we'd all have unlimited money to fix access problems and we'd have 1,000% accessible polling places. But we don't - and we need to be realistic. We instead need to work together - here in Ohio and elsewhere. We can all work to get more HAVA money allocated for accessibility and we need to continue to work to find access solutions that are dignified for voters with disabilities, but which also understand the limited budget that we have as election officials.

SHARE YOUR STORY

We are always looking for advocates and people with disabilities to share their stories about access to polling places. If you or someone you know is interested in writing a "From My Perspective" article or sharing an anecdote, please give us a call at 1-866-232-5487 or email us at havaccess@inclusionsolutions.com.

Inclusion Solutions:

Minnesota has allocated \$192,382 of their \$202,382 for improvements to polling places and has given counties until April 30th to submit their applications for reimbursement. Grants will be distributed by June 1, 2004.

Minnesota counties also received information from the state outlining their accessibility obligations, providing them with a sample survey, as well as grant application forms.

[Minnesota HAVA Disabilities Grant Page](#)

Surveying Polling Places Part I: Challenges

Although funds have been made available for polling place accessibility, many election officials have faced an initial task that must come before any access improvements -- surveying their polling places. This article, the first of a two-part series on surveying polling places, just like any good journalist, asks Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Who: Doing access surveys completely in-house poses two problems. First, election officials are already overworked - surveying all of one's polling places may prove to be a big job. Second, officials themselves often don't have the expertise that outsiders do. Enlisting the help of those "in the know" - be they local disability advocates, centers for independent living, state protection and advocacy offices, attorney general's offices or others is crucial. Working with these groups brings not only more hands to lighten your load but also provides invaluable experience and understanding of the issues affecting voters with disabilities. Indeed past surveys done in conjunction with these groups have historically been much more accurate and well-received.

What: What survey tool one uses is also crucial. Surveys vary. Some are comprehensive and read almost like building codes. Others are as short as one page but don't provide as much depth of coverage. Some concern only the outside of polling places and others evaluate interior accessibility features ranging from accessible voting booths to bathrooms to the availability of magnification devices and signature templates. The issue of choosing and designing a survey will be explored in more detail in the next HAVAAccess. However, the link below will take you to several surveys from around the nation.

When/Where: The timing of surveys is equally crucial. Ideally, surveys should be done at polling places on an election day - as conditions on election day are unique. For example, some election officials have encountered problems when side entrances that were supposed to be open are locked on election day. Similarly, if temporary improvements are being used for access, they may only be out on election day. Doing surveys on election day is a wise choice.

Why: Even if your jurisdiction has conducted an accessibility survey before, you should consider doing so again in 2004. Past surveys have sometimes been incomplete and haven't accounted for all accessibility factors - often missing on less obvious concerns such as path of travel and door hardware. Past surveys may also not have been conducted on election day. Access improvements can't be made without adequately evaluating the scope of problems, if any. Finally, since the passage of HAVA never before has there been such a national push for accessible polling places - nor has there been federal funding. A current evaluation can help identify problems in a post-HAVA era and position your county for access improvements and funds to help pay for them.

How: How a survey is done is often the trickiest part. For example, Chicago is planning to survey over 1,500 polling places on the date of the Illinois

Your One-Stop Resource

Inclusion Solutions continues to work with state and local election officials, as well as P&As and other advocates to solve polling place access.

Election Trade Show Coming Up?

Inclusion Solutions has spoken with election officials at trade shows on HAVA and access issues nationwide and have attended several accessible voting fairs. Please [email](#) us for information about speaking engagements and trade shows!

DOWNLOADS:

[NEW! Updated Catalog of Access Products](#)
[Door Hardware Evaluation Tool](#)

Past Issues:

[Vol I. Issue 1 February 2003](#)
[Vol I. Issue 2 May 2003](#)
[Vol I. Issue 3 Special Funding Update May 2003](#)
[Vol I. Issue 4 June 2003](#)
[Vol I. Issue 5 September 2003](#)
[Vol I. Issue 6 November 2003](#)
[Vol II. Issue 1 January 2004 \(via email\)](#)

For past issues with operating links, email elections@inclusionsolutions.com or call us toll free at 1-866-232-5487.

We carry BallotCall, portable ramps of all sizes for your inaccessible locations, parking lot and other signage, roll-over matting (for gravel, grass lots), interior access kits with magnifiers and signature templates, accessible voting booths and more. Our solutions are affordable use of access grants.

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

North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, & Florida Officials (and anyone else): Visit our official distributor for your states [Printelect Updated 2004 Catalog](#)

Subscribe

If you liked this HAVAAccess [click here to forward it to your](#)

primary. But coordinating over 100 surveyors is no small task. Ideally surveyors should be given some instruction on how to conduct evaluations - preferably at a session before election day. Evaluators should ideally be armed with at least a tape measure and a uniform survey tool. Other tools that some evaluations require are a slope evaluation tool or fish-pull to check the weight of doors. North Carolina have gone even farther, providing officials with a digital camera to take pictures of each polling location.

There are many options for improving accessibility: Polling sites can be changed, they can be permanently fixed, temporary improvements can be made, and alternative solutions such as curbside voting can be put implemented. But an accurate survey is a crucial prerequisite to providing accessible polling places.

Next Month: A survey of access surveys from around the country

For survey assistance, survey tools, or copies of other surveys call us at 1-866-232-5487 or [email us](#).

[Sample Access Surveys from Numerous States](#)

[colleagues](#).

New readers, [sign up here](#).

>> Next HAVAccess:

We will continue to update you on current issues including:

- *More on 2004 Elections and Access*
- *Surveying Polling Places Part II: A survey of surveys*

Inclusion Solutions© 2003. All rights reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#)

You are subscribed as hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com. To unsubscribe please [click here](#).

POWERED BY
Campaigner
BY GOTMARKETING