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Special Funding Update
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 [hava access newsletter](#)

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IMPORTANT UPDATE

This is a special bonus issue of *HAVA*Access, a free newsletter developed by Inclusion Solutions to help election officials implement election reform measures -- specifically the accessibility provisions included in the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

On May 21, 2003, The Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") announced the grant procedure for allocating, distributing, and receiving the \$13 million appropriated for accessibility under HAVA -- this issue explains the process as well as ways to maximize use of these funds. Inclusion Solutions is not affiliated with HHS or any other government agency.

See below for the official link to the revised announcement.
 The regular issue of HAVAAccess will resume next month.

[Please Forward This To Other State and Local Election Officials](#)

[Official HHS Funding Announcement](#)

\$13 Million Available in FY 2003 For Access

On May 29, 2003, the Department of Health and Human Services published an amended announcement explaining the process for the applications for the \$13 million allocated under the Help America Vote Act.

"The cornerstone of the United States is its reliance on a free, democratic society," HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson said. "Ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the same access to voting services that other Americans experience is an essential right and works to make our nation stronger."

All states, the District of Columbia and the territories eligible under the statute may apply for the funding, which will be distributed in fiscal year 2003 by HHS' Administration on Developmental Disabilities, part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Each state and certain territories will receive funds of at least \$100,000 each and up to over \$1.3 million (California) under this program. Funds will be distributed to state departments of elections, which will be charged with using

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Need Assistance With Access?

While the funding provisions of HAVA and HHS are exciting news, state and local election officials nevertheless face serious budget limitations and limited funding to address this issue.

Inclusion Solutions is committed to assisting state and local election officials secure funding for access and proactively address the issue. We are members of the Illinois HAVA subcommittee on disability access, and have spoken with HAVA planners and election official nationwide. Inclusion Solutions can assist officials with preparing applications or narrative reports as to how funds are being used for the four categories.

Specifically, our products such as signage, portable ramps and our Ballot Call (in final development) are designed to meet the HAVA/HHS requirements:

- Ballot Call helps "make polling places including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas accessible to individuals with the full range of disabilities"

the funds or distributing them to local officials and jurisdictions.

In order to receive payments, state applicants must submit in writing to HHS a detailed application stating, among other requirements, that the grant will be used in four categories of HAVA-mandated activities including:

1. Making polling places, including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting area of each polling facility accessible to individuals with the full range of disabilities.
2. Provide the same opportunity for access and participation to individuals with the full range of disabilities.
3. Train election officials, poll workers and election volunteers on how best to promote the access and participation of individuals with the full range of disabilities in elections for federal office.
4. Provide individuals with the full range of disabilities with information about the accessibility of polling places

Please see the section on state election officials as well as the link below for more information on these requirements.

Please see the sidebar article for ways in which Inclusion Solutions can help state and local election officials fulfill these requirements.

HHS' Web site has more information: See <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/add/HAVASummary.htm>

State Officials -- Applications and State Plans

State Election Officials evaluating the issue of accessibility are encouraged to move forward with the HHS grant application process -- and should start considering other ways in which to address the issue of accessibility on a statewide level.

State Boards of Elections will be the direct recipients of HHS funds and it will be up to state election officials to complete applications before the July 7, 2003 deadline. If applications are not received by that time, the funds will be distributed pro rata to the states and territories.

The application must include a specific description of what will be done in each of these categories as well as a statement of how much of the grant will be used in each area. Applications by state officials must include names of states, chief election officials and people to contact; a completed SF 424 application (available at: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/add/announce.htm>); several federal certifications; and the signature of the state Chief Election Official.

Applications must be delivered to HHS, Office of Grants Management, 370 L. Enfant Promenade SW, Mail Stop 326 F, Attn: Joseph Lonergran, ph: 202-401-6603.

After the funds are received, state and territory grantees are required to submit annually to HHS a narrative report that describes how the funds are used with respect to the four categories of activities authorized under HAVA.

Beyond the HHS Funds, State Election Officials should also consider the issue of

- By allowing election-day access to votir rather than alternatives such as absentee voting and alternative locations, our solutions "provide the same opportunity for access and participation" as for other voters. Our reference materials help "[t]rain electio officials, poll workers, and election volunteers on how best to promote the access and participation of individuals with the full range of disabilities"
- As opposed to permanent changes, which may be cost-prohibitive given funding limitations, our solutions are affordable and portable -- which means that election officials control the proces
- We can also assist in providing individuals with disabilities appropriate information about the accessibility of polling places. Please call us -- we would love to hear your thoughts on the issue.

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

For free copies of prior issues of HAVAccess, Email us at backissues@inclusionsolutions.com.

[Ballot Call Temporary Polling Place Access Solution](#)

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>> Next Month's HAVAccess:

We will resume the normal issue of HAVAccess next month and will continu to update you on funding provisions, state HAVA plans, and further developments.

Also:

- North Carolina: A model for implementing accessibility standards
- "Election Reform, Polling Place Accessibility, and the Voting Rights of the Disabled" a summary of a law review article from the Election Law Journal (Reprints of full article available

polling place accessibility as they consider their HAVA plans and develop State HAVA committees.

now - email
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Finally, state officials should realize that while this \$13 million **must** be used for access-related activities, the requirements payments authorized under HAVA may also be used in part for this purpose as well. The HHS-administered funds are a great start, but other sources of funding will be needed in order to fully solve the problem.

Local Officials -- Waiting and Proactive Steps

While the announcement of HHS funding is exciting news, local officials may wonder what their next steps are for addressing access and accessing these monies. Funds will be distributed through state boards of elections, and not directly to local officials.

The Help America Vote Act itself authorized \$100 million for the issue of polling place accessibility. Originally the law appeared to authorize local election officials as well as states to apply for these funds. Indeed Lance Gough, Chicago's director of elections echoed the thoughts of many election officials when he indicated his intention to apply for these funds directly from HHS.

However, HHS has made clear that the funds will be administered through only state officials and local officials will need to work with state boards of elections to receive funding.

Local officials can still proactively address the issue in several ways, including:

- Contact state officials and urge them to apply for the HHS funding.
- Explain your jurisdiction's desire to receive a portion of the HHS funds. Local officials should begin to evaluate the issue and notify state officials of their desire to obtain these funds.
- Explore other sources of funding for accessibility including other HAVA requirements payments which may be used for access, other payments from state boards of elections, and local funds.
- Talk with local disability advocates and centers for independent living about the issue and ways to ensure that elections at your local level are accessible.
- Start to evaluate your polling places for accessibility and think about alternative ways to resolve outstanding issues so that HHS funds can be used when they reach the local level.

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