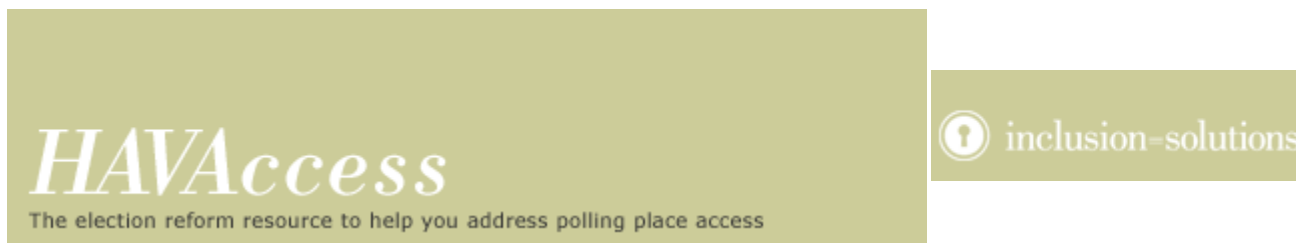


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Subject: HAVAccess November Newsletter

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Accessible Polling Places

This is the sixth issue of *HAVAccess*, Inclusion Solutions' free newsletter to help election officials implement HAVA's disability access provisions. With elections for many tomorrow and one year until the presidential general election, now is a good time to think about access. For copies of past issues, email us at hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com or call us toll free at 1-866-232-5487.

Also, check out this month our free
[POLLING PLACE DOOR EVALUATION TOOL](#)

Funds Now Available: Future in Doubt?

While \$13 million in access funding is now being distributed by state departments of elections, future funding is in doubt. This issue contains an special article on Congressional developments for additional HAVA funding. The planned article on local access leaders will be moved to next issue.

Newsbrief: MARYLAND PRAISED AS A STATEWIDE ACCESS LEADER
 On October 20, 2003 the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) presented the state of Maryland's Election Director, Linda Lamone, the Accessible Voting/Justice For All award. Under Linda Lamone's leadership, Maryland is leading the nation in accessible voting. Rhode Island is the first state to make all of its polling places wheelchair accessible and Georgia is the first state to offer an accessible voting machine in every polling place. Maryland is on track to be the first state in the nation to have all of its polling places accessible and to have accessible voting machines in each polling place. *(Reprinted from PR Newswire)* [Full News Story on Maryland Access Award](#)

2004 HAVA Funding and Access

The Senate voted last month to add \$1 billion in funding to the Help America Vote Act. The issue is now headed to a House-Senate conference -- and the

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From My Perspective...

This month's From My Perspective includes comments from advocates nationwide on the issue of access to the electoral process.

"I cried - that was my reaction. There was so much hurt and so much emotion that was built up."

-Jessie Jane Lewis, performance artist and plaintiff in Philadelphia lawsuit regarding inaccessible voting, to the Philadelphia Inquirer after case settled with promise to solve all access issues by January 1, 2006

"This incline isn't really easy to get up, and besides that, these steps here -- I'm not going to be able to vote here."

-NBC 10 Philadelphia reporter Ray Leight, in a piece aired last week claiming 1,400 of the city's polling locations had

issue is certain to implicate the disability access provisions of HAVA as well as the bill as a whole.

The Senate passed the funding bill 63-31 on October 23. Leaders in the Senate were Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

Underfunding has hit the disability provisions of the law particularly hard. For example, \$50 million was allocated for disability access to polling places for FY 2003 - and only \$13 million was actually appropriated. Other access funds - such as \$20 million for new accessible voting technologies were eliminated completely.

There were several impetuses for the additional funding -- but the role of election officials, civil rights, and disability rights advocates was considerable.

On September 29th, a consortium of ten organizations representing state and local officials teamed up with 36 civil rights organizations to address the funding issue in a letter to Congressional members. Calling HAVA funding to date "woefully inadequate", the organizations requested that HAVA be funded through special appropriations.

Sen Dodd sent out a letter on October 10, 2003, to his Congressional colleagues: He wrote: "The shortfall in funding is threatening to undermine the ability of the States to implement the very reforms that Congress acknowledged were necessary and required the States to implement, in some cases, in time for the federal elections in 2004."

Senate leaders took up the challenge -- adding the amounts to an appropriations bill funding agencies including the Transportation and Treasury Departments.

Dodd said on the Senate floor that there was "overwhelming" support for additional funding from "a bipartisan and powerful coalition of state and local election officials, in conjunction with all the major civil rights, disability, language minority and other voter interest groups..."

Among the groups supporting full funding are the American Association of People With Disabilities, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems. The letter from these organizations points out that full funding is needed, among other reasons, to "make it easier for people with disabilities to cast private, independent ballots."

The final funding level will depend on the conference committee. Interestingly, the bill does not partition out the funds under HAVA -- deciding instead to generally fund the law with specific division of the funds to be done at a later date.

Full funding is certainly important to all portions of HAVA - and the accessibility provisions are no exception. Many are optimistic that this Senate passage is the first step towards better-funded reform. HAVAccess will keep you updated as events unfold.

Door Hardware: A Primer

Many election officials - whether working alone, in conjunction with state officials, or in conjunction with disability advocates, are now surveying their polling places for accessibility. Some aspects such as whether there are steps at the entrance are easy to evaluate. Other issues are harder for the untrained eye to spot -- and door hardware is one of them.

The wrong kind of door handles or a heavy door can be an insurmountable obstacle to many voters with disabilities. Many voters lack the manual dexterity to open many types of doors - preventing them from accessing their polling places.

The Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) sets standards for door hardware. It requires that doors handles have a design that does not require any kind of twisting or turning to open the door. Moreover, door handles should be no higher than 48 inches from the finished floor.

access barriers for people with disabilities.

Most able-bodied people do not understand the significance of so-called "minor" access problems like steep ramps, bumpy parking lots or heavy doors

-Disability advocate Samantha Barnett, from an article in the Columbus, Georgia Ledger-Enquirer.

New York, in addition to having a Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Task Force appointed by the State Board of Elections, has a parallel organization comprised of good government groups and individuals representing the stakeholders in elections who want to see voter participation increase, and who want to ensure that this opportunity to use federal dollars to buy new voting technology successfully enfranchises the greatest number and widest array of voter interests. So far, the interests of all have been adequately addressed, and in NYS we are trying hard to come to the end of the process with no fissures in the strong coalition we have built.

The two main sticking points to successfully advocating for great improvements in New York State using HAVA monies made available by the federal government are voter- verifiable paper trails on the new DREs... and eradication of the full-face ballot requirement in NYS, so that new Americans can read ballots with instructions in their language of choice...Braille, and that sign language interpreters be available at polling sites with advance notice for deaf voters.

-Alexander Wood, director of the Disabilities Network of New York City, in discussing changes made in New York

"I would hope other states would look at what we're doing here, and work toward that same goal."

-Rep. James Langevin (D-RI), discussing in AP Online, Rhode Island's leading effort to make all polling places statewide accessible.

SHARE YOUR STORY
We are always looking for advocates and people with

One Virginia voter noted: "My polling place has an accessible wheelchair ramp but unopenable doors at top. I had to call ahead and they propped the doors open." A Chicago voter noting that the entrance door "stuck and had to be pulled very hard to get it open and there was a doorknob, not a lever, so someone with handgrip problems would not be able to independently open the door."

The problem of inaccessible door hardware is a prevalent one at polling places nationwide - and its one that officials often overlook. The General Accounting Office 2001 Report on polling place accessibility found that 84% of polling places nationwide had some barriers to access - and door hardware and weight issues are often among these.

In 2002, the North Carolina State Board of Elections had local officials survey all polling places statewide for accessibility. The survey found that 26.9% of polling places had inaccessible door hardware. But local variations demonstrated inconsistencies in evaluating the issue. For example, Durham County officials believed that all 54 polling places had accessible door hardware including door hardware. But nearby Halifax County found that all 30 of their locations had inaccessible door hardware. State Board of Elections chief Gary Bartlett is ensuring that this issue is addressed in an upcoming round of surveys.

Thus while many officials have addressed steps and other more obvious barriers at polling places, the issue of door hardware often remains. It can be difficult for untrained officials to properly understand the nuances of door hardware.

Officials are urged to consider this issue when evaluating their polling sites. While you may want to enlist the aid of either local disability rights advocates or experts, the following tips may also help you with the issue.

- A simple way of determining whether your door hardware meets the proper standards is to try the "Fist Test." Try opening the door or your polling place using only one hand, held in a fist. If you can do it, so can a person with limited manual dexterity
- Door Types for Access
 - Accessible Doors
 - "Loop-style" doors
 - "Lever-style" doorknobs
 - Cross-plate Push-in doors
 - Automated Doors
 - Accessible Push-button alternatives
 - Inaccessible Doors
 - Doorknobs
 - "Panel-style" door handles
 - Revolving doors
 - Cross-plate Pull-out doors
- [A free door evaluation tool](#) which can be used for evaluating your polling places, is available from Inclusion Solutions. Click on the link, call us at 1-866-232-5487, or email us at hbundy@inclusionsolutions.com.

But even after the issue has been identified, officials struggle with resolving it. Many polling sites with door hardware issues aren't controlled by election officials - and it can be difficult for election officials to mandate changes on sites that they don't own and which should have independently made the changes themselves years ago. Solutions for inaccessible door hardware include:

- Changing or modifying door hardware
- Posting an election official outside of the door to assist with the door List item
- Propping or taping the door open at all times
- Implementing a temporary door hardware solution such as BallotCall

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 info@inclusionsolutions.com.

Inclusion Solutions: Solving Access Issues

Inclusion Solutions continues to work with state and local election officials, as well as P&As and other advocates to solve polling place access. Please call us for free information and evaluation.

Also remember that our *Ballot Call* system solves door hardware issues -- without requiring expensive door retrofits. It includes an ADA-compliant oversized pushbutton -- so you don't need to worry about door hardware issues. BallotCall can also be used to allow voters to get to accessible side entrances, request a portable ramp, or as a notification system for voters needing to request curbside service.

We also carry Portable Ramps of all sizes for your inaccessible locations, Signage, roll-over matting (for gravel, grass lots), and consulting/surveying services.

OUR SOLUTIONS ARE AFFORDABLE USES OF HHS FUNDS

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

[BallotCall Door and Curbside Access Solution](#)

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Finally, while automated doors are not required, some voters cannot open any doors that are not automated. Election officials are urged to consider, where feasible, alternatives that are accessible to all voters.

[Free Polling Place Door Hardware Evaluation Tool](#)

HAVA Access:

We will continue to update you on new developments and talk about proactive initiatives on access. **Plus:**

- Local Leaders on Access (postponed from this issue)
- Path of Travel and Parking Lots

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