

HAVAcess

The election reform resource to help you address polling place access

 inclusion=solutions

[2007 Inclusion Solutions Access Catalog](#)

[2008 New Products Sheet](#)

Inclusion Solutions is an American company that focuses on making voting and polling places accessible to voters with disabilities. We carry over 200 products to address access [Please see our 2007 Catalog](#) and [2008 New Products Sheet](#).

HAVAcess is [Inclusion Solutions'](#) free newsletter to help election officials make their elections more accessible under the Help America Vote Act or other national laws.

This is a special issue sent out on November 6, 2007 -- election day in the United States of America. It is sent primarily out to international election officials but also to several U.S. officials who were recently added to the list. After this issue, you will be included on regular mailings of our newsletter -- about once every 2-3 months.

UK officials: Please come look for us at our first international trade show: [Association of Electoral Administrators Seminar in Blackpool, England on February 24-27 2008](#)

Back to Back Elections

With U.S. November elections today and 2008 presidential primaries moved up in many states, the next few months will be very busy. This issue talks about some of the accessibility implications of these changes, revisits the issue of accessible parking, and includes a special "From my Perspective" from Gail Pellerin -- a California county clerk who has faced many challenges in this area.

Both advocates and states are providing more information than ever on accessibility of voting. New York's Catskill Center for Independence, long a leader, has published the most recent issue of their newsletter, now available online. [HAVA Quarterly](#).

And the State of New Jersey Department of the Public Advocate, on September 27th, issued [a report outlining the status of accessibility at polling places throughout New Jersey](#).

2008 Funding, The President of the United States' budget proposes \$16 million for Section 261 of Help America Vote Act funding through 2008. With a presidential election year coming up and constantly evolving standards, never has it been more important than now to keep funding for access improvements and protection and advocacy agencies at current levels.

Selected State Grant HAVA EAID Grant Materials Available Online

Michigan: [Voting Access for Individuals With Disabilities: Polling Place](#)

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From My Perspective...

by Gail Pellerin

Gail Pellerin is the County Clerk in Santa Cruz County California. Perhaps no election official nationally has worked harder on this issue than Gail. She is a frequent speaker on the issue and has spearheaded nationally-leading efforts despite facing constant litigation in the area.

The road to improve the accessibility of polling sites in Santa Cruz County has been bumpy, but we are now clearly on the road to success.

Information was first brought to Santa Cruz County election officials by the State Attorney General's Office in 2003. The Attorney General alleged that a number of facilities used as polling sites in our county did not comply with the technical requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as the provisions of California's Building Code Title 24, which in some cases is more restrictive than ADA.

At the time, our accessible voting program included ballot delivery to persons who could not access their polling site, curbside voting on

[Improvement Grant Program](#)

Minnesota:

[Election Assistance For Individuals With Disabilities Grant Program Information](#)

Vermont: [Request for Proposals: Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities \(VOTE\)](#)

Other Developments on Access:

California: [Santa Cruz, Kern Agree To Improve Poll Site Disability Access](#)

New York: [Poll Site Access for the Disabled \(August 2007\)](#); [Polls being checked for handicap access](#); [Voting machine aids those with disabilities](#); [Critics slam plan for disabled voting equipment](#)

Connecticut: [The future is here: optical scan voting machines on display at Senior Center](#)

Ohio: [State gets aid to improve polls for disabled voters](#)

Missouri: [Ballot machines cater to disabled voters](#)

New Hampshire: [New system to aid disabled voters](#)

Massachusetts: [New voting machines reach out to disabled](#)

Pennsylvania: [Disabled cast vote for change](#)

Check out the [2007 Catalog](#) with great new solutions and our free [access surveys analysis program](#).

Making Parking Accessible for Disabled Voters

In visiting thousands of polling places around the United States and Beyond and reviewing and [analyzing](#) thousands of access surveys, by far the most common problem for accessibility is a lack of properly designated accessible parking. Despite uncertainty on the standards, these are problems that can normally be solved with simple solutions and common sense.

The standards for accessible parking seem obvious enough at first glance. Polling places should have clearly marked level parking spaces for voters with disabilities ideally 8 feet wide with an adjacent van access aisle.

In some cases, these standards work well. When evaluating a public facility such as a village hall or government office used for voting, the standards set forth under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and the accompanying accessibility guidelines (ADAAG) are intuitive and clear.

But in other instances, these standards don't translate well to election day use. One such disparity is how many accessible parking spaces are required. For example, ADAAG is clear on the number of accessible parking spaces required at a facility. It's normally at least one and then one for every 50 parking spaces. But what, for example, is the obligation of an election official doing voting at a large church with 500 parking spaces but only one precinct? Surely there will not be nearly as many voters as parishioners on Sunday and it would be unreasonable to expect the election office to ensure that there are 10 proper accessible spaces. Similar problems occur in examining international standards.

States have addressed these issues in different ways. Some suggest two parking spaces per polling site (one van accessible, and one standard space) while others believe that one van accessible space is adequate. One good compromise some officials have used is to require one accessible space per precinct sited at a polling location.

Another common problem is that parking that may be compliant for a facility's everyday use may not work for election day. The classic example is a school where voting is in a gymnasium or area away from the front entrance. While the main parking lot may be properly marked and signed, that location is not close to the area where voting is taking place. Election officials in this situation should create additional accessible parking near the voting location and should post signs at the main parking lot directing voters to the close-in parking.

Churches pose another problem. These facilities are not covered by the ADA most of the year. Yet when used for voting, they must provide accessible

Election Day, voting by mail, weekend voting, early voting at two locations during the 29 days before the election, as well as voter outreach to convalescent and residential care facilities in the county where voters could receive individual assistance from election officials in the comfort of their living environment. In addition, we searched for polling places that were high-use facilities that had ramps, ample parking and lighting. And we quickly learned that just because there's a ramp and a parking place sporting the universal sign for accessibility that does not mean the facility meets the requirements of ADA and Title 24.

To improve our accessible polling facilities program we needed several items: an effective survey with clear questions and correct standards; the right survey tools (a digital level, door pressure gauge, measuring tape, etc.); people who were trained on how to use the tools and the survey; a greater understanding of ADA and Title 24; compliant mitigation measures (such as ramps, thresholds, cones); money to purchase mitigations measures; a Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee to provide advice and guidance to ensure voters with specific needs have equal access to voting; and finally documentation that we were doing everything possible to ensure that we were using the most accessible and usable polling facility available to serve voters in a given precinct.

We immediately began to implement these changes and develop an Access Compliance Plan to direct the work that needed to be done. In spite of our efforts, the Attorney General filed a lawsuit in 2005 against Santa Cruz and Kern counties, thereby leaving the other 56 counties with concerns that they could be next. In 2006, after California elected a new Attorney General, a Settlement Agreement was reached in Santa Cruz County that recognized the work we were already doing or planning to do to improve polling place access, and created a framework for assessing the accomplishment of accessibility goals. Kern County reached a similar agreement this month.

Fortunately, with federal Help America Vote Act funds we were able to fund many of the one-time costs such as purchasing mitigation measures and survey tools. However, to sustain the program over the years, county funds will

parking. Many churches also seem to have painted parking spots but no upright signs. Whether at a church or anywhere else, accessible parking spots should always include some sort of an upright sign designating the space.

Complicating matters further are differing state standards. New York and California, for example, have differing requirements for parking and/or path of travel that can make it even more difficult to determine the appropriate solutions. And [Hawaii](#) has set forth a requirement of 80 inch height for the posting of permanent signs.

Fortunately, many solutions have been developed to address accessible parking. Upright permanent signs, parking spots, parking stops, and other solutions can create permanent spaces and some election officials have even purchased parking lot stripers to mark spaces in their jurisdiction.

Temporary parking can also easily be created -- no matter what the standards. To do so, you will need a temporary parking sign (mounted on a cone or post) and multiple cones. Cones are used to mark both the parking space and the adjacent access aisle. Normally 4 cones are necessary to create an 8 foot wide, 18 foot long space and two more are needed to extend it to an access aisle if needed. Cones can also be used to create an access aisle next to an existing parking space where there is none.

But even this is not without its uncertainty. The U.S. Department of Justice [ADA Checklist for Polling Places](#) provides an excellent explanation of how to create accessible temporary parking spaces including a required access aisle width of 96 inches. But there is no specification for height on temporary signs: DOJ guidance is merely to "Provide a sign designating each accessible parking space." (See page 8). In fact, the ADA generally doesn't require the same standards for temporary signs.

Likewise, the American Association of People With Disabilities in their publication "[Voting: A Constitutional Right for All Citizens](#)" points out that "Signs located at the accessible parking spaces should be mounted on posts and should be clearly visible to drivers."

Thus temporary signs are not held nationally to the standards for permanent installations. Most temporary signs (such as those mounted on cones or posts) are clearly visible to voters approaching a space but do not reach the height normally found on a permanent sign. States have specific language requirements on permanent parking signs as well -- although these do not generally apply to temporary signage. Still, interpretations of these standards differ throughout the United States and you will need to check with your state for specifics -- and world standards of course vary as well under legislation such as the [United Kingdom's Disability Discrimination Act](#).

While this discussion only touches on some of the considerations for parking, common sense has prevailed in most jurisdictions nationally to date. Parking at polling places for voters with disabilities should be well-marked with an access aisle and should be close to the voting room. Careful thought, cones, signs, and directional signage can remedy most polling place parking issues on election day.

Pages 4-5 of the [Inclusion Solutions Catalog](#) shows different matting options for unpaved lots as well as a more detailed comparison.

Thoughts: Election Accessibility in Island Jurisdictions

This is a reprint of an article from the March, 2006 HAVAccess on election accessibility in island jurisdictions apart from the United States.

As election officials, especially in the Northern states, emerge from the winter, HAVAccess examines how election accessibility is approached in some of the United States' tropical island jurisdictions. These states and territories include Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and Guam. The extraordinary efforts made in some of these locales deserve mention.

need to be used unless additional HAVA funds are appropriated for accessibility purposes.

In addition, we have greatly benefited from working with an Access Compliance Specialist for several years now. As a result, we have developed a comprehensive survey to use when determining the accessibility of a polling facility along with an Access Compliance Plan to assist us in maintaining an accessible voting program. Moreover, we are continuing to work with the Secretary of State in California to take what we've learned and developed in Santa Cruz County and develop a statewide effort so voters in all counties will benefit from more accessible polling sites. It's a road worth traveling.

[California AG Release on Santa Cruz and Kern Settlements](#)

[County to pony up about \\$230,000 to improve disabled access at polls](#)

[2005 Santa Cruz County Polling Place Access Plan](#)

Inclusion Solutions: U.S. and Now World Leader on Access

[Inclusion Solutions](#) has now worked with officials in 49 states, Canada, Australia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and elsewhere. -- it has been a privilege to work with election officials worldwide and it has been our pleasure to work "hands on" with all of your offices. If you have questions you need or additional access funding available, call us to talk through more innovations.

Inclusion Solutions is America's -- and the world's leader on election accessibility initiatives. Our products are all best of class and meet federal standards, we will review your accessibility surveys or photographs at no charge, we will stand behind our products and our work, and are always happy to work with advocates or other individuals with disabilities in your community. Other vendors who may be experienced in elections can't provide these services. Inclusion Solutions stands alone on election accessibility.

We are coming to the UK in February 2008!

These jurisdictions do have some advantages when it comes to accessibility, compared to other states. First, the HAVA EAID Section 261 polling place accessibility funds are provided on a pro-rata share by state or territory with a minimum annual amount of \$100,000. Some of these islands are much less populated than the states receiving this minimum. For example, while states such as Utah, Connecticut, Iowa and Mississippi received \$100,000 each in FY 2004 and FY 2005, so did these territories – some of which have a population of only a fraction of these states.

Second, the tropical climate sometimes allows simple solutions that other states may not have. They don't need to worry about snow or ice blocking entryways. And when doors are too heavy or have inaccessible door hardware, they can sometimes simply be propped open on election day – a luxury that clerks in many states don't have on a cold November day.

Puerto Rico completed one of the more extensive reports to the Department of Health and Human Services on their activities to date including surveying sites, training, and providing solutions for accessibility of polling places. For details, see the [actual report](#).

Other territories such as Guam and American Samoa, have discussed accessibility in their state plans and are still in the process of addressing issues. These jurisdictions face unique additional challenges such as their remoteness and rural villages. But the efforts of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Hawaii merit special mention.

The [U.S. Virgin Islands](#) has made election accessibility a priority, according to director of elections John Abramson. The U.S. Virgin Islands has one more advantage when it comes to accessibility compared to other states. Election day is a holiday throughout the territory. Not only does this increase turnout, but it makes using schools for polling places much easier. Without students in session, some of the security issues at school that can cause accessibility barriers are resolved.

The U.S. Virgin Islands has also taken great steps to ensure accessibility of the election process. The elections office has worked with Virgin Islands Advocacy to complete surveys of every polling place throughout the territory. Each location is now working toward complete accessibility, and the territory is providing auxiliary aids at every polling place.

Hawaii has also made impressive efforts in terms of access. The Office of Elections has partnered with the Disability and Communication Access Board to provide widespread services and training. DCAB and OE have surveyed polling sites throughout the state and have provided many accessibility solutions. Further surveys and evaluation in 2006 will lead

For officials throughout the United Kingdom, Inclusion Solutions will be displaying at the [Association of Electoral Administrators Seminar in Blackpool, England on February 24-27 2008](#). Please come by, pick up a catalog, and say hello!

If you've completed -- as UK Regulations have set forth -- surveys of your polling places -- we can help you turn those results into solutions with our No Cost Help Going Through Survey Results program. Call us toll free -- we have [analyzed survey results and come up with non-binding proposals for hundreds of jurisdictions worldwide](#).

Even if you've solved all your polling place physical access issues give us a call -- there are always more solutions to make elections even more accessible.

Featured Products in the [2007 Catalog](#) include:

- **Cone Top Signs** These popular new signs stick right into existing cones and are weather-proof. Parking, directional, poll distance, and even custom signs available.
- **Paint Stripers to Paint Parking lots and Parking Stops**
- **Lighter and Stronger Ramps** with non-slip surfaces and other improvements.
- **Also Available are Sip-N-Puff Adapters for all Electronic Voting Machines and wands to allow individuals with limited reach to activate voting screens.**

We carry solutions for all

to even more improvements throughout 2006 and beyond.

DCAB has also sponsored training days and has worked closely with local officials to train them in how to survey polling locations – and they are in the process of completing a "how to" video on surveying. And each polling place in Hawaii will be provided with a custom "auxiliary aids" kit with numerous magnifiers, signature guides and more.

America's island jurisdictions remain committed to accessibility. And perhaps some mainland officials can envy their efforts in serving all voters, as well as their winter weather.

accessibility issues in your polling places from parking lots, to steps, to door hardware, to restrooms to inside of the polling place. Our [products](#) are primarily portable and owned by you, the election official, and are consistent with Section 261 of HAVA.

[Also see our brand-new 2008 New Products Sheet](#)

[Other Materials and Free Resources](#)

- [Sample Polling Place Survey](#)

- [Free door hardware evaluation form](#)
- No Cost 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. [Please see a Sample Survey Analysis](#)

- **Free CD Rom with Power Point Training on Accessibility**
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