

From: 'Rachel Coll' via Clearinghouse <clearinghouse@eac.gov>
Date: Mon, 25 Nov 2019 22:17:56 +0000
Subject: Clearinghouse Award - Accessibility Competition Submission
To: "clearinghouse@eac.gov" <clearinghouse@eac.gov>
Cc: Monica Evans <mevans@dcboe.org>, Terrica Jennings <TJennings@dcboe.org>

Clearinghouse Category: Improving Voting Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities

The DC Board of Elections (BOE) works diligently to ensure the accessibility of the voting process for DC residents; especially people with disabilities, senior citizens and limited English proficient voters. Our efforts include eliminating barriers to voting like inaccessible polling sites, curbside voting at all polling sites, no excuse absentee voting, as well as providing disability etiquette training for poll workers and BOE staff members. The D.C. Board of Election provides language access services for customers/voters who are limited or non-English proficient (LEP/NEP). Pursuant to the Language Access Act of 2004, we offer translated election related materials in required languages, as well as a full range of professional interpreting services via LanguageLine, including more than 10,000 highly trained interpreters who are fluent in over 240 languages and American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) for constituents who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed! In fact, several local organizations have highlighted our commitment to accessible voting. Observe DC is a local organization that conducted the first nonpartisan, sample-based election observation in U.S. history. The organization observed all polling sites during the 2018 General Election and reported that over 91.6% of District polling sites allowed voters to independently cast their ballots. Additionally, the organization reported that 98.8% of DC polling sites were accessible/provide an accessible entrance. Voters with disabilities and senior citizens also had the option to vote absentee, vote curbside or by transferring their ballot to a more accessible polling site. Sarah Blahovec, Disability Vote Organizer at The Center for Independent Living (CIL) also tweeted in June 2018 that, "if you want an excellent example of a local election office working on accessibility (both disability and language- wise), look at @Vote4DC. Terrica Jennings and Alice Miller are doing exceptional work on inclusion and accessibility."

Please see the attached documents for our complete submission and more information regarding our efforts to make voting accessible for all District residents!

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Our point of contact for this submission is:

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Sincerely,

Rachel Coll

Public Information Officer

DC Board of Elections



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BOARD OF ELECTIONS



WASHINGTON, DC 20003-
4733

CLEARING HOUSE AWARDS: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

The DC Board of Elections (BOE) works diligently to ensure the accessibility of the voting process for DC residents; especially people with disabilities, senior citizens and limited English proficient voters. This includes eliminating barriers to voting like inaccessible polling sites, curbside voting at all polling sites, no excuse absentee voting, as well as providing disability etiquette training for poll workers and BOE staff members.

Summary of all available accessibility services:

Voter Access Services

- Accessible electronic absentee voting platform in place for the 2020 election
- Voter registration assistance in-person, via vote4dc app or online
- Accessible polling sites and service animal friendly environment
- Accessible ExpressVote voting machines: Visual aids (high contrast and zoom functionality), touchscreen, sip/puff access, audio-tactile pad, braille, multilanguage ballot etc.
- Alternative voting options: Curbside voting for voters ages 65 or older or any person with a disability, early voting, “no excuse” absentee voting or transfer your ballot
- Disability etiquette training for Election Day Workers
- Voter Assistance Clerks (VAC) to assist with voting and ADA Compliance Assistants to keep polling sites accessible
- Alternative format and multilanguage election material
- Election Day hotline and 711 (DC relay/TTY) service for voters with auditory disabilities

Language Access Services

- American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) available at designated polling sites
- In-person and/or telephonic multilanguage interpreters available at all polling sites
- Language access kits with translated voting information available at all polling sites
- Multilanguage posters and directional signs

The D.C. Board of Election provides language access services for customers/voters who are limited or non-English proficient (LEP/NEP). Pursuant to the Language Access Act of

2004, we offer translated election related material in Amharic (አላላ), Chinese (中 文), French (Français), Korean (한국어), Spanish (Español) and Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt). However, we also offer a full range of professional interpreting services via LanguageLine, including more than 10,000 highly trained interpreters who are fluent in over 240 languages and American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) for constituents who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing.

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reported that over 91.6% of District polling sites allowed voters to independently cast their ballots. Additionally, the organization reported that 98.8% of DC polling sites were accessible /provide an accessible entrance). Voters with disabilities and senior citizens also had the option to vote absentee, vote curbside or by transferring their ballot to a more accessible polling site. Sarah Blahovec, Disability Vote Organizer at The Center for Independent Living (CIL) also tweeted in June 2018 that, *“if you want an excellent example of a local election office working on accessibility (both disability and language- wise), look at @Vote4DC. Terrica Jennings and Alice Miller are doing exceptional work on inclusion and accessibility.”*

Please see highlights below, concerning our efforts to make voting accessible for the residents of the District of Columbia during the 2018 General Election. We have also attached a report concerning voting and language access in the District for the 2016 election year.

Highlights from the last Election: 2018 General Election

I. Accessibility

In addition to addressing structural and operational accessibility issues at polling places for the General Election, the Board has done the following to improve accessibility for DC residents:

- Redesign the agency’s website, in order to improve its accessibility (alt text for all pictures, improve accessibility with screen readers etc.);
- Trained early voting staff, Voter Assistance Clerks, Ballot Clerks and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Assistants extensively regarding Title II of the ADA, ADA compliance, and disability etiquette;
- Revamped the election worker training class to include more practical exercises and simulated polling place exercises involving people with various disabilities. We also provided the training material in more accessible formats such as large print, electronic and Braille;
- Created several new signs to make it easier for senior citizens, people with disabilities, and LEP voters to navigate our polling sites. New signs included detailed instructions regarding how to contact the ADA Coordinator and/or precinct captain on Election Day, as well as signs to quickly identify the in-person interpreters inside the precinct;
- Updated the Voter and Language Access Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document with information on reasonable accommodations, voter access, accessible polling sites, ballot transfer requests, etc. for senior citizens, people with disabilities, and LEP voters;
- Updated section 714.3 of the DC Board of Election Regulations to change the requirement that voters must contact the Board in writing, by no later than the

seventh (7th) day prior to Election Day to request that a complete ballot for his or her precinct of residence be brought to the accessible polling place on Election Day. Voters can now contact the Board using any effective mode of communication or through a representative to make the request;

- Created an electronic and accessible version of the ADA Compliance Assistant Application Form and Election Worker Request for Reasonable Accommodations Form;
- Redesigned the Election Day voter access signs to make them multi-language; previously the signs were only available in English, Spanish and Mandarin. During the last Election, we provided signs in Amharic and Vietnamese as well;
- Conducted outreach events designed to inform senior citizens, people with disabilities, and LEP voters about the Board's accessible voting technology, language access services; and other accommodations available to voters on Election Day. This included participation in National Disability Voter Registration Day, the Mayor's Annual Disability Awareness Expo and the National Federation of the Blind local conference;
- Attended monthly meetings/trainings hosted by the DC Commission on Persons with Disabilities and the Office of Disability Rights;
- Collaborated with the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) to promote the REV UP (Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power!) Campaign and National Disability Voter Registration Week (NDVRW), which aims to increase the political participation of the disability community while also engaging candidates and the media on disability issues;
- Celebrated National Disability Voter Registration Week and promoted the REV UP campaign by hosting two voter registration drives, the first at our main office on Monday, July 16, 2018, and the second on Wednesday, July 18, 2018 at the Center for Independent Living; and
- Hosted two Voter Access Forums to engage the disability community. The first forum was held on April 26, 2018 and the second on October 10, 2018. Several disability rights advocates, lawyers, senior citizens, voters with disabilities, and other interested groups and individuals attended participated in the events.

II. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Assistants.

- The Board deployed 35 ADA Compliance Assistants throughout the city on Election Day. Each was assigned four to five polling places to visit throughout Election Day in order

to identify and address any correctable issues that presented barriers to voting for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

- ADA Compliance Assistants were tasked with several duties, including: completing a precinct operational accessibility survey; posting directional signage along routes to the polling place’s accessible entrance and the voting area itself; propping doors open where possible; assisting election workers with assigning accessible parking spaces where possible; placing the accessible entrance bells at the appropriate places; and ensuring that auxiliary aids, including magnifying glasses, Language Access kits, and headphones, were available and prominently displayed so that voters were aware of their availability.

III. Language Access

- Thirty-one (31) Spanish, 5 Mandarin, 1 Vietnamese, 2 Amharic, and ASL six (6) interpreters were deployed to 52 polling places to enable limited English proficient (LEP) voters and voters with auditory disabilities to participate meaningfully in the electoral process. Prepared and distributed 190 Spanish and Mandarin Language Access kits that contained translated election-related materials (ballots, forms, voter access signs, ExpressVote screenshots, etc.) to accommodate LEP voters.

IV. Polling Place Accessibility

The Board collaborated with the Department of General Services (DGS), the Department of Transportation (DDOT) and The Office of Disability Rights (ODR) to ensure that polling places were both structurally and operationally accessible for the General Election. DGS provided a team of facility managers, building managers, and engineers to correct structural issues at government buildings that serve as polling places. Modifications included installing automatic door openers, temporarily removing narrow doors, and removing center poles that were obstructing narrow doorways. The Board relocated seventeen (17) sites during the last election; only two sites were relocated due to inaccessibility concerns. Additionally, several polling sites received temporary ramps or thresholds during the Election season.

Temporary ramps / thresholds were installed at the following polling sites:

Precinct #	Precinct Name	Modification
37	Banneker Community Recreation Center	Temporary ramp
67	Bunker Hill Elementary School	Temporary ramp
83	J.O. Wilson Elementary School	Temporary ramp
120	Malcolm X Elementary School	Temporary ramp
45	Metropolitan Police Department - Regional Operation Command (North)	Temporary ramp

	(June 2018 primary Election only)	
81	Miner Elementary School	Temporary ramp
60	St John United Baptist Church	Temporary ramp
60	Nativity (June 2018 primary Election only)	Temporary ramp
106	Ridge Road Recreation Center	Temporary ramp
4	School Without Walls (Francis Stevens High School)	Temporary ramp
13	St Margaret's Episcopal Church	Threshold installed at accessible entrance
69	Perry Street Preparatory PCS @ Taft (November 2018 General Election only)	Temporary ramp
133	Orr Elementary School (June 2018 primary Election only)	Temporary ramp

We collaborated with DGS/ DDOT to have the following projects completed:

Precinct #	Precinct Name	Modification
121	Ferebee-Hope Recreation Center	Center bar removed
83	J.O. Wilson Elementary School	Center bar removed
98/99	Smothers Elementary School 4400 Brooks St. NW WDC	Center bar removed
45	Metropolitan Police Department - Regional Operation Command (North)	Permanent ramp installed at rare entrance, parking lot restriped to meet ADA standards and sidewalk completed repaved
8	Palisades Recreation Center	New permanent ramp and ADA compliant from door installed
82	Sherwood Recreation Center	New door installed
105	Benning Road Recreation Center	Accessible entrance was fixed (push to open system was in operable)

V. Accessible Voting Machines

Since 2016, District voters have had access to the most accessible voting system in the country. The Board uses the Election Systems & Software (ES&S) ExpressVote voting system, which offers voters a private and inclusive voting experience. The voting system is ADA Compliant and provides all voters with the option to navigate ballot selections independently, using various peripherals (headphones, sip-and-puff device, two-position rocker switch etc.). This gives voters access to an intuitive vote selection process via screen prompts, symbols and audio.

The Board participated in several outreach events created to inform senior citizens, people with disabilities, and LEP voters about the Board’s accessibility services. We also registered voters and demonstrated how to use the accessible voting machines:

List of prominent outreach events and meetings VEOD/ADA Team Members participated in during calendar year 2018	Date
Department on Disability Services Voter Registration Drive and Training	February 16, 2018
Voter Access Forum	April 26, 2018
Terrific Inc. Older Americans Mental Health and Wellness Fair	May 19, 2018
10 th Annual Olmstead Conference	August 20, 2018
National Disability Voter Registration Week	July 16-20, 2018
REV Up Voter Registration Drive at BOE	July 16, 2018
REV Up Voter Registration Drive at The Center for Independent Living	July 18, 2018
Disability Community Outreach Collaborative Meeting	September 20, 2018
Voter Access Forum	October 10, 2018
National Federation of the Blind Conference	October 12, 2018
Mayor’s Disability Rights Expo	October 23, 2018



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003-4733



FAQ: VOTER AND LANGUAGE ACCESS

Need help in your language? Call (202) 727-2525	በቋንቋዎች እርዳታ ማግኘት ይሻሉ? በስልክ ቁጥር (202) 727-2525 ይደውሉ።	Avez-vous besoin d'aide dans votre langue ? Appelez le (202) 727-2525
모국어로 도움이 필요하세요? (202) 727-2525로화해주세요	Cần sự trợ giúp ngôn ngữ của bạn? Hãy gọi (202) 727-2525	¿Necesita ayuda en su idioma? Llame al (202) 727-2525

1) **Do you have an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator on staff to assist and answer questions from voters with disabilities?** Yes. The ADA Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the efforts of our agency to comply with the ADA, respond to complaints filed by the public, and ensure that all eligible voters have equal access to the voting process.

2) **I have a disability; can I still register to vote?**

Yes. In order to register to vote, you must:

- Be a United States Citizen
- Be a resident of the District of Columbia
- Be at least 16 years old (District residents may preregister to vote at age 16, but will not receive a voter registration card or be eligible to vote until they are at least 17 with a date of birth indicating that they will be 18 on or before the next general election)
- Not be in jail on a felony conviction
- Not have been found by a court to be legally incompetent to vote
- Not claim voting residence outside of the District of Columbia

3) **How can I register to vote?**

- **Online:** Visit www.dcboe.org or www.vote4dc.com
- **On your phone:** Use our mobile voter registration app, Vote4DC, which allows you to sign and send your application from your mobile phone or tablet.
- **In-person:** Register in-person at DCBOE or District government NVRA agencies. Registration is also available using the Driver License or Identification Card Application (Form DMVR-4) at DC DMV offices.
- **Polling place:** At your polling place on Election Day.
- **Outreach events:** Voter registration drives are held at various community functions, organizations and nursing home facilities.

- 4) **Do I need to provide ID?** It depends. To register by mail you must have either a driver's license number or a DMV-issued ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. When registering for the first time by mail you will additionally need to include a copy of one of the following:

- Valid District of Columbia DMV-issued ID
- Government check or paycheck*
- Bank Statement*
- Utility bill (*The issue, bill, or statement date must be within 90 days of Election Day*)
- Student housing statement/tuition bill
- Homeless shelter occupancy statement
- Lease
- Other government document that shows the name and address of the voter

5) What programs and services do you provide for voters with disabilities, senior citizen and no or limited proficient voters?

Voter Access Services

- Voter registration assistance in-person, via vote4dc app or online
- Accessible polling sites and service animal friendly environment
- Accessible ExpressVote voting machines: Visual aids (high contrast and zoom functionality), touchscreen, sip/puff access, audio-tactile pad, braille, multilanguage ballot etc.
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6) **Do I have to vote in person?** No

- A. **Vote in-person on Election Day:** Senior citizens and people with disabilities can vote in-person at their assigned polling place on Election Day. Voter Assistant Clerks will be present to provide assistance.
- B. **Curbside voting:** Voters who are unable, for reason of disability, seniority, or illness, to enter a polling place on the day of an election may arrange to vote from their car.
- C. **Early Voting Center:** You can cast your ballot at any Early Voting Center using the Board's accessible touch-screen voting equipment. The touch-screen offers a voter verifiable paper audit trail of all votes cast. Each voter will be checked in at the Early Voting Center using electronic poll books that are connected over a secure network so that a voter cannot check-in and cast a ballot at more than one location.
- D. **Absentee Voting/Vote by mail:** DC offers "no excuse" absentee voting. Please contact our office during each election season to find out the deadline to request your absentee ballot. All ballots must be received by DCBOE by 8pm on Election Day. Ballots can be mailed or delivered in-person to DCBOE offices, dropped off at any Early Voting Center until the published deadline, or dropped off at any polling place on Election Day. To request an Absentee Ballot, complete the form online at www.dcboe.org and then print, sign and mail it to the Board or send a letter to the Board's physical address at 1015 Half Street, SE, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20003. If you send your own letter, you must include:
 - i. Your name
 - ii. Your residence address and recent change of address;
 - iii. The address where your ballot is to be mailed (if different from your residence address);
 - iv. Your date of birth;
 - v. Your DMV-issued ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number
 - vi. Your signature.
- E. **Transfer your ballot:** Notwithstanding DC Official Code §714.1(a), a voter whose residence is served by a polling place that has been identified as inaccessible pursuant to Section 8 of the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act may vote a regular ballot at another, accessible polling place if they: are a senior citizen or a person with a disability; and they contact the Board by **no later than the seventh day prior to Election Day** to request that a complete ballot for their precinct of residence be brought to the accessible polling place on Election Day.

7) **Is my polling site accessible?** All early voting centers in the District meet strict Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. On Election Day, we work collaboratively with other government agencies and volunteers to maintain accessible polling sites.

8) **Will I be allowed to bring my service animal inside the polling place?** Yes. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service

animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

- 9) **Is there someone who can help me if I do not know what to do once I am at the polling place? Can my spouse/partner/child/friend/neighbor help me inside the voting booth?** Yes. Feel free to bring a relative, friend or neighbor to assist you, as long as they are not your employer, an election observer, or union representative. DCBOE Voter Assistance Clerks will also be on hand to help at every Early Voting Center and Election Day polling place.
- 10) **My assigned polling place is not accessible for my specific needs. Can I vote somewhere else?** Yes. DCBOE offers Curbside Voting at all polling places on Election Day. You or someone you know can vote a ballot right from the comfort of your car. A Voter Assistance Clerk will be available to confirm your voter registration and bring you your ballot. Another option is to request a ballot transfer. DCBOE will provide you with a ballot at a closer, more accessible location, as long as the request is made at least seven days before Election Day.
- 11) **Are your voting machines accessible?** Yes. The ExpressVote system was designed to accommodate voters in the general voting population, including voters with cognitive, dexterity, auditory and visual impairments. Voters have several options to make candidate selections.
- Voters may touch the screen or use the moveable keypad provided.
 - The display includes various colors and effects to guide the voter.
 - The voter may adjust the display contrast and text size in order to read the screen.
 - Each key on the pad has both Braille and printed text labels designed to indicate function and a related shape to help the voter determine its use.
 - Alternatively, voters may also use headphones to hear a recorded list of the instructions and candidates for each contest and then make selections by touching the screen, touching the keypad, touching a two-position switch, or through a sip/puff device.
 - The voter may adjust the volume and tempo of the audio.
 - Language Access is also a priority as the ExpressVote allows the voter to switch the language to Spanish.
- 12) **Can I change my vote choice(s) before I cast my vote?**
Yes. The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requires any new voting equipment to allow voters the opportunity to change their choices privately and independently before the ballot is cast and counted.
- 13) **What should I do if someone pressures me to vote for a particular candidate?** Please ask to speak with the Precinct Captain and report the matter/ individual immediately. While you are able to receive help with voting from an Election Day Worker or a person of your

choosing, no person or official providing voter assistance should in any way influence or attempt to influence your choice in voting. Any person who violates this rule is subject to a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment up to five years, or both, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 1- 1001.14(a).

14) I have trouble reading and understanding what is printed on my ballot. I would like to be able to vote privately and without help, just like everyone else. What are my rights?

The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requires that voters with disabilities be able to cast their vote privately and without assistance. Each polling place has at least two (2) accessible voting machines. These new voting machines use assistive and adaptive technology to provide the opportunity for voters with a wide range of disabilities to vote privately and independently.

15) May I move to the front of the line on Election Day if my disability requires it?

Yes. Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), moving to the front of the line when necessary would be a reasonable accommodation. If your disability prevents you from staying in line, let an Election Day Worker know and ask to be moved to the front of the line. If you choose to stay in line, however, the poll worker cannot make you move to the front of the line just because you have a disability.

16) I have a cognitive disability, are there any restrictions on my right to vote in the District of Columbia? No. Assuming you meet all other requirements to vote, you are eligible to vote unless there is a current and valid court order that indicates that a court has found you legally incompetent to vote. It is not up to an Election Day Worker to determine your competence to vote. Even if you have a guardian, you will still be allowed to vote as long as you are eligible.

17) Can I vote if I live in a nursing home, hospital, or other facility? Yes. You can vote in-person or by Absentee Ballot, as described above. Alternatively, if you are living at a licensed District of Columbia nursing home, assisted living facility, or federal medical center, you may register to vote, request an Absentee Ballot, and have your ballot hand-delivered by a Board employee to your facility or bedside. Please contact your nursing home administrator immediately if you would like to request an Absentee Ballot.

18) I filled out my Sample Ballot ahead of time. Can I bring it inside the polling place as a “guide”? Yes. You may bring in sample ballots and other “notes” to assist you with voting, but you must take them with you when you leave.

19) I lost or damaged my absentee ballot; can I get a replacement? Yes. You should contact the Board to have a replacement Absentee Ballot mailed to you.

20) Is there a way for me to vote if I experience a health crisis shortly before an election? Yes. If you are unable to vote in-person at an Early Voting Center or on Election Day, you may be able to request an Emergency Absentee Ballot.

An Emergency Absentee Ballot is made available on the **sixth day leading up to an election**. You must meet certain criteria to request this ballot from the Board. To vote an Emergency Absentee Ballot, you must fill out an Emergency Absentee Ballot Application. This form is available at www.dcboe.org or in office.

An Emergency Absentee Ballot must be delivered and returned by a qualified registered voter. Your ballot must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

- 21) **Can I be an Election Day Worker if I have a disability?** Yes. Having a disability is not grounds to bar an otherwise qualified person from serving as an Election Day Worker. There is an application process and a mandatory training class.
- 22) **Do we provide reasonable accommodations?** Yes. A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment made in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need. That need can vary.
- **Low-tech:** Any accommodation that is technologically simple or unsophisticated, and readily available (e.g., providing a magnifying glass or sound amplifier).
 - **No-tech:** An accommodation that does not require the use of any technology (e.g. American Sign Language Interpreter)

The D.C. Board of Elections is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, and employment for individuals with disabilities. To request a reasonable accommodation please contact the ADA Coordinator at tjennings@dcboe.org or call (202) 727-2524.

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