



*For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

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The President's Commission on Election Administration

Roundtable meeting convened by the National Council on Disability on July 11, 2013

The Arc is a membership organization of over 700 state and local chapters made up of people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities, their families, friends, interested citizens, and professionals in the disability field. The Arc has represented individuals with disabilities for nearly 60 years.

The following observations are from the state chapters of The Arc.

Massachusetts

Overall, the experiences with registration and voting for people with disabilities have been good.

Infrequent reports of people being prohibited from providing support to someone in voting booth; quickly resolved when intervention sought from secretary of state.

Occasional reports of accessibility problems at a polling site.

Florida

Positives

The Arc of Florida, Disability Rights FL (the P&A), the Secretary of State, and the FL State Association of Supervisors of Elections collaborate to make registration and voting easy for citizens with disabilities, including asking supervisors of elections to visit facilities to register and inform voters.

Negatives

Disability Rights Florida (7/3/13) reported that:

Motor Voter not working in Florida (contractors unaware of obligation)

No accommodations for long lines (people have difficulty standing and waiting in line for long time)

Lack of accessible parking at polling places (due to long lines, accessible spots did not turn over frequently enough)

Lack of signage about accommodations and whom and where to seek assistance

Achieve with us.

North Carolina

Positives

Early voting is very helpful because it offers less pressure, fewer people, less wait time, more convenient for family members who provide transportation and don't have to miss work.

Curb-side voting

Negatives

Significant confusion about guardianship and voting rights (misperception that guardianship = incompetency)

Confusion about who can support someone in voting process

Per NC statute, people living in institutions may receive assistance in obtaining and using absentee ballots (reading the ballot) only from a near relative (many in institution do not have), legal guardian (may not have access), member of multipartisan voting team from local board of elections (not uniformly available and if available not trained)

Absentee ballot envelop must be signed by one witness (state statute does not specify who may witness but State Board of Elections wrongly interprets as having to be near relative (many in institution do not have), legal guardian (may not have access), member of multipartisan voting team from local board of elections (not uniformly available and if available not trained)

Many polling places are not accessible (NC Dis. Rights surveyed 352 polling locations in 12 counties on election day in 2008 or 2010: 80% had at least one inaccessible feature; 29% had 4 or more; 3 counties had inaccessible features at 100% of polling places surveyed; also surveyed 161 One Stop early voting sites in 59 counties in 2008 and 2010: 76% had one or more barriers).

Frequent barriers found included:

- Lack of accessible parking (not really accessible; not close)

- Voting machine too close to wall to allow wheelchair access or objects in path to accessible voting machine

- Curb side voting – no signs about how to access; no way to signal poll workers you want it

State-based Potential Negatives that would disenfranchise voters who live in institutions

Proposed constitutional amendment to disenfranchise voters with guardians by disenfranchising anyone deemed incompetent which is the standard for guardianship in NC

Pending legislation that would codify misinterpretation about who may witness absentee ballot and would require two witnesses to absentee ballot

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Fitzgerald