

>> Chairman Masterson: Good morning and welcome to everyone both here at the EAC offices and virtually on YouTube, Facebook and other social media sites. My name is Matt Masterson and I am Chairman of the Election Assistance Commission.

This morning we are going to have a roundtable to discuss election innovations in and serving veterans with disabilities in the voting process. I have an esteemed group of panelists here today that I'll introduce in just a minute.

The purpose of today's discussion is to identify opportunities and challenges that exist assisting veterans with disabilities in the voting process and ways that we can help election officials serve this very important population.

Our nation and its election officials have a welcoming spirit, can-do attitude when it comes to helping veterans with disabilities, and the disabled community as a whole. Today's event coincides with the second annual National Disability Voter Registration Week, and the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary month of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Later this year we will celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Help America Vote Act, which provides landmark provisions for voters to vote privately and independently, particularly voters with disabilities.

We here at the EAC want to work with election officials, veterans with disabilities, the Veterans Administration, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, and any other organizations to ensure full access for voters with disabilities, particularly those who have served us.

The EAC previously funded studies focused on helping veterans with disabilities in the voting process. Following a competitive grant proposal competition, the Information Technology Innovation Foundation (ITIF), was awarded the research for the Military Heroes' Initiative, which we will hear about today.

In working with veterans with disabilities in VA facilities across the United States, the EAC and ITIF, with their research effort and their research partners conducted a comprehensive study of the current situation on voting for veterans with disabilities.

This produced a report and a pilot blueprint on potential ways to improve voting technology and processes for thousands of military service members who have sustained disabling injuries in combat operations. All this research is available on our website at [EAC.gov](http://EAC.gov).

According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 3.9 million veterans have a service connected disability. Many of these individuals may be dealing with traumatic brain injuries, amputations, post-traumatic stress disorder, or any number of cognitive and physical injuries, and striving to serve veterans with these challenges; we often grapple with finding the best solution to meet their needs.

Casting a ballot can be a difficult process for anybody. We must ensure that these individuals can vote privately and independently. We have an obligation to assist those who have given so much to their country to exercise their most basic right, the right to vote. And jumping off from the ITIF research and programs such as Secretary of State Paul Pate's Helping Veterans and Iowans with Disabilities Vote initiative, the EAC will identify tips and best practices for election officials to further assist veterans with disabilities. We will not only improve services for those who have served us, but improve the voting process for all voters with disabilities and voters as a whole.

So with that, I'd like to start by introducing our panelists, giving them an opportunity for brief introductory remarks, and then we'll get in to the discussion. I'm going to start to my left with Mr. Lee Page. Mr. Page is a Senior Associate Director for Advocacy for the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He joined Paralyzed Veterans of America in 1990 to support the rights of people with disabilities by advocating for the removal of regulatory and discriminatory barriers through interaction with Congress, the Administration, federal agencies, other disability organizations, private industry and the general public. In this role, Mr. Page also educates others on the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society through instructional or video training. Mr. Page was also critical in advising and informing the passage of the Help America Vote Act.

Mr. Page, thank you for being here and for your participation, and some time for some brief opening remarks.

>> Thank you, Matt. It's a pleasure to be here today. I think this is my first time live on Facebook.

>> Welcome.

>> So it's a new medium. But yeah, definitely, it's hard for me to believe that it's been 15 years since the Help America Vote Act passed. It was a very unique time in our country, and our history. Congress came together and put that law together and it has a lot of disability issues within the law and PVA, Paralyzed Veterans, has had a long history of advocating for our members, veterans, to have accessible voting. All veterans vote and as I said, it's a pleasure to be here today. The EAC has done a lot. But like I said, it's a pleasure to be here.

>> Well, thank you for being here. I look forward to hearing your comments and thoughts and sharing your expertise with all of us. Next to my left is Terry Wagoner, who is the Absentee and Disabilities Coordinator with the Virginia Department of Elections. As the Absentee and Disabilities Coordinator, she serves both UOCAVA voters and voters with disabilities at the state board of elections for the last eight years. Prior to that, she was the Absentee Coordinator for the city of Richmond General Registrar's Office. Ms. Wagoner, thank you for being here and sharing your practical experience both with the state and local level.

>> Thank you all for having me here. The Department of Elections in Richmond, Virginia, totally supports all HAVA needs. I am there at all times for answering the phone, for any discussions that need to be viewed. We also want you to know that we are completely supportive of our disabled Americans, whether they are from the service or from the general public. Please know that we are there to support you. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Ms. Wagoner. Thank you for being here.

>> Next to my right, someone familiar to all election officials, one of our partners, Scott Weidman, the Strategic Communications Chief for the Defense Personnel and Family Support Center, including the Federal Voting Assistance Program, who of course the EAC partners with regularly to serve military and overseas voters.

In this role, Mr. Weidman administers the federal responsibilities of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act and has traveled the country working with state and local election officials, and FVAP plays a unique role here in serving not only active duty, but helping to get them right up to that point to transition to veteran status, providing information on voting services. Mr. Weidman, thank you for being here and taking the time to share your expertise with us.

>> Happy to be here, and as you mentioned, under UOCAVA, the primary focus that we cover are active duty military and their family members as well as US citizens overseas. So it's the folks that are on the cusp that have been wounded prior to leaving the Department of Defense that we are primarily interested in assisting in this capability. And we did a project called Operation Vote several years ago, which looked at the folks that had been wounded and what are some of the issues that they face in using the voting equipment. Especially at that time, electronic ballot delivery systems had just been required under the Move Act a couple of years before that. I would be happy to talk more about that as we move forward.

>> Yeah, absolutely. I look forward to hearing more about that, not only just the challenges but the opportunities that things like electronic ballot delivery provide to those voters and how we can do it better. To his right is Mr. Daniel Castro. Daniel is the Vice President at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, or ITIF, as I mentioned before, and Director of ITIF's Center for Data Innovation. Mr. Castro writes and speaks on a variety of issues related to information technology and Internet policy, including privacy, security, intellectual property, Internet governance, e-government, and accessibility for people with disabilities. As mentioned before, Mr. Castro was the project lead on the EAC's grant for military heroes, which I know you'll talk a little bit about later. So Mr. Castro, thank you for being here and sharing the results of that research and what

you were able to learn.

>> Thanks, yeah. Really excited to be here, and it's always good to be back at the EAC and really to thank you guys for leading the charge on having us do that really innovative research. What we have found and I will talk about this a little more later, but what we found was that there really was a very specific need to look at the military population, the veteran population, and see how they differed from the rest of the general population, as well as people with disabilities, and look specifically at how programs could actually be set up to help them. And so that research that the EAC funded back then I think really proved the value of taking those in-depth looks and looking at potential solutions in the space, because we have seen a number of states be very innovative in how they start approach these issues.

I think this research helped identify some of the solutions; it helped identify some of the problems that we were still seeing and I think paved the way for more programs we have seen in the year since then. So just again, really appreciate the opportunity to be here and thank you again for funding that research in the first place.

>> No, I appreciate it. Thank you for being here. I look forward to talking about again what your research found. But most importantly, what steps election officials can take to serve veterans with disabilities as they engage in the election process. Next, to Mr. Castro's right is again someone familiar to all of us in the election space, Mr. Don Palmer, who is a BPC, or Bipartisan Policy Center fellow, focusing on the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.

Prior to that -- the Board of Elections by former Virginia governor Bob McDonnell in 2001, and served as the Commonwealth's chief election official until July 2014. Prior to that, he formally served as the Florida Department of State's Director of Elections during the 2008 and 2010 election cycles, which accounts for some of that gray hair, I think, serving both in two swing states. Perhaps most importantly for this discussion, earlier in his career, Mr. Palmer was a US Navy intelligence officer and judge advocate general deployed overseas onboard the USS John F. Kennedy in tours of duty in Italy, Florida and Washington DC, familiar with the

military service. Thank you for your service and some of the challenges that folks in the military both while active and post-active duty, some of the challenges they face, so Mr. Palmer, thank you for being here.

>> Thank you, Chairman Masterson. I think just briefly, I think that from a national level, the President's Commission on Election Administration highlighted this issue and there were bipartisan recommendations, and that can be used across the country with legislation on how to tweak our system and use technologies that are emerging to help veterans and veterans with disabilities. From the state level, you know, the Congress has appropriated funds both with Health and Human Services and Help America Vote Act funds, and it really is a responsibility of a state election official to create a program targeted toward these communities, to individuals with disabilities and particularly veterans with disabilities. Because the money is available and there are emerging technologies, and that will really allow you to develop relationships with the organization and the best contact, we really are the states of the laboratories of democracy. So that money is there to sort of test and to test new technologies, and how we can use that for our Veterans and for our Veterans with disabilities. Some have grievous injuries, and there are disabilities that make voting sometimes a difficult process when it's private, and independent, but technology is sort of getting us there. So each state should have a program really to serve these voters, provide that information, and sort of test sort of the new technologies out there for the future.

>> Thank you, Mr. Palmer. Finally then is Michael Ross, the Iowa Deputy Secretary of State Michael spent his career in grassroots advocacy and raising resources for political causes. He first worked with Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate during Pate's first term as secretary in 1994. He liked it so much the first time you thought you'd come back around again 20 years later, and are now serving with Secretary Pate in a second stint as Secretary of State of Iowa. Currently Mr. Ross oversees business services scheduling communications outreach for the Iowa Secretary of State, and one of the highlights of your work is the program that I'm actually going to have you talk about in just a minute, which is the Helping Veterans in Iowa with disabilities vote program that Secretary of State Pate created and that you've been working on to do the outreach to these groups. So Mr. Ross, thank you for being

here and sharing some of the work you all are doing in Iowa.

>> Sure. We appreciate it here, and in fact we're probably the learners at the table, we're not the experts, we're trying to get as much information from you guys, and we have 300,000 Iowans with disabilities many of those are Veterans, and so one of the things that kind of got us going, kind of overarching thing I was at the car dealership getting the car worked on sitting in the lobby and there was this banner that basically said they've enlisted, now it's your turn.

So I took a picture of that, and shared it with our staff and Secretary Pate, and as we looked at that and kind of thought on that a little bit, kind of the idea of you had our back, now when it comes to voting we have your back became our theme. So that really became the piece and the thought and the idea. Our challenge was, you know, how could we do that, how could we show and demonstrate we had their back, because they had ours.

And then second, how could we communicate that to them. So that was kind of our driving force. You got our back, now when it comes to voting we have yours.

>> That's a great story and a great program that I look forward to you sharing as this conversation advances. Now I want to start first with Mr. Castro and then Mr. Wiedmann. Mr. Castro, if you could just talk first about some of the findings of your research, the challenges that Veterans with disabilities face in the voting process, and then we'll talk after that about some of the steps forward, innovations that could be used. And then Mr. Wiedmann if you could talk about the operation vote project that FVAP did and some of the findings of that research, as well. So Mr. Castro, to start.

>> Yeah, absolutely. So this research that we did, and that we did I guess maybe seven or eight years old, so just with that caveat, we looked very specifically at recently separated Veterans and Veterans with disabilities, and we were asking, you know, how does that map to the voting process. So we were looking very carefully at all the steps that go into a voter successfully casting a ballot, successfully participating in an election, and then adapting that to the different types of needs.

What was really important I think for this research is that we took a user-centric perspective which is the model that companies like Apple are using when they design the latest technology, and we're asking not just does the voting equipment work, but does the whole election process work for the vote. I think that was an important way of looking at this issue, because what we found was that although sometimes it was the voting technology itself that we were having experiencing problems with for the voter, or the ballot design, often it was, you know, some of that supporting -- the supporting systems that go into the voter actually being able to participate that were most important.

So we were finding that for example many voters that were coming back, especially when we were talking about, you know, Veterans that had been Iraq or Afghanistan, they had traumatic brain injury, so they had TBI, some of the symptoms they might exhibit would be for example difficulty concentrating or an aversion to noisy public places.

Now, if you've been to many election voting poll stations you'll know that can often be a crowded environment, it can be noisy, there can be a lots of lights, it can be an unfamiliar situation. And that specifically was a very in conducive situation toward helping these voters be able to successfully vote. So allowing these voters to mark their ballot at home, participate in mail-in balloting, these were the types of solutions we're finding were very useful for that population.

I could go on, there's a lot in this space. Maybe I'll stop there but just say that broadly there were probably three areas that I think were most important. One was it was important for states to really be thinking across the border, thinking across the board about whether they were implementing best practices for accessibility. So were they doing things like allowing, you know, same day registration, early vote periods, online voter registration?

Second, were they working with VA facilities? So were they actually going to where many of these voters were, were they working with the facilities on voter education, were they working with them on voter assistance? And sometimes, you know, the election officials were actually trying to deal with some of the issues with the VA,

they didn't always understand that no, this was a perfectly acceptable thing to do, sometimes there was some confusion about whether that was political activity as opposed to just part of normal civic life that's allowed.

And the third is on the transition. I was really happy to hear about some of the work that FVAP has been doing recently because that was one of our big findings from this research is there was a gap in this transition where a lot of voters they had really good support systems when they were in the military, but after they were injured and they were being transitioned out to civilian life there was sometimes this gap, you know, they were going to be moving back home they were moving to a different location. They had a lot of support services, but those support services didn't have a good relationship necessarily with the local voting operation. So making those connections I think was really powerful.

And then having that support system in place, so that the person that's dealing with significant health issues, financial issues, family issues, you know, voting can't be another issue they're dealing with that needs to be something that's just provided to them.

So there was really -- I think the positive take away is there were lots of opportunities and there were lots --- you know there are a lot of people that want to make this happen. So it was a very positive experience in that regards. But there's still a lot of work to be done.

>> And you know, I think Mr. Castro touched on this -- I keep wanting to say Scott - - Scott, if you could fill in from FVAP perspective that transition, so often the challenge that FVAP faces is that it's not on top of mind for active duty military and then in the case of a soldier that's been injured is transitioning, there's another list of a thousand challenges facing them in voting once again that isn't top of mind. So what has FVAP found from their research to help kind of look at that transition and facilitate the voting process as they move from active duty to a Veteran?

>> Right. Like you say, you have folks that are injured and they may or may not be returning to the battlefield, that's a decision that has to be made medically, but

they're in a position and the elections are coming up. So what we wanted to look at with the operation vote project was not -- we looked at the voting system vendors that are out there, but we didn't want to compare one vendor versus another, we wanted to look at the situations that face wounded warriors and what it is they would need to go through the process. Specifically at that time with the passage of the MOVE Act, all the states were required to provide electronic ballot delivery to the voter if requested. Many states were using fax at that time, but now most states are doing that electronically or online. So we wanted to look at the various aspects of that. Usability requirements, the privacy, parts of that, cognitive issues, perception issues, as well as interaction with the system itself.

We looked at some of the accessibility areas that you were referring to that were needed by the specific injuries or the more predominant injuries that many of the wounded warriors face. Low vision, blindness, dexterity issues, mobility, language proficiency could even be upset by that. And one wrench if you think that many of these folks were facing as we were talking on the way over here was that it wasn't just one injury; many of these folks had maybe had an IED that they -- injury they were dealing with they may have lost partial sight as well as dexterity in the hands, so there was multiple issues these folks were dealing with in addition to getting used to that and transitioning out of the military and whatnot.

So we wanted to look at the full process to capture that from logging on, instructions, and icons that were there, navigating through the ballot, logging on was specifically an issue with the CAPTCHA that was popular at the time, it's still being used, when these funny looking letters come up on the screen and you have to replicate that to prove you're not a robot, that could be difficult for folks with visual impairment to figure out how to do that. And then there's issues with scrolling, as well. If you have a ballot item that doesn't fit on the one screen, scrolling down can be an issue that can be faced.

And then once you're done with the online interface, you have this ballot and you've completed it, printing out the PDF, folding into origami, into an envelope and mailing it, all those type of issues, and of course on top of that, overlying all that are logistical and security concerns. So plain language guidelines that are out

there from groups like Design for Democracy, those type of things could make things easy for everybody, but especially those with various impediments.

The labeled icons for clarification, as you drag them out, your software over that, you'll be able to have that read to you. And then when a new system is being designed for anybody, but especially for these wounded Veterans, integrating these accessibility features, the ability to resize the fonts on the screen, change the contrast; touch screen, audio capabilities with JAWS and those type of interactive systems.

Then if you make a mistake as you're part of the way through of the ballot, making it easy to go back and change that. You may want to go back and change who you voted for one. Or you think you voted for one, and you want to go back and make that change. And then I talked a little bit about the scrolling to minimize that. So those were some of the recommendations that came out of that as people were designing systems.

>> Mr. Palmer?

>> Some of the domestic Veterans with disabilities I think we found was that sometimes they just need to understand that we understand this isn't the top priority, but we're here to provide assistance. And local laws or the state law would usually allow for different types of options, and as long as the caregiver or the group was aware these are options, sometimes they would -- fine, we'll bring -- like Virginia allows, we can go into the facility, we can have that person vote if they'd like to. If they didn't want to vote or receive their ballot by electronic.

But sometimes it's a communication between organizations to make sure they understand what Virginia, and in my case Virginia state, can offer or the locality can offer by means of voting or registration.

>> Mr. Page, as you've heard sort of the research oriented identification of some of the challenges coming from the position of your organization and what you hear from your membership and the challenges that they face, one is what do you hear

about the voting process, how far have we come from HAVA, where do the challenges lie, but specifically what advice do you have for election officials those sitting at this table and watching, tone gauge with folks like the VA, and other federal agencies, to improve the communication and services to Veterans with disabilities.

>> Sure. It's interesting hearing what you guys have just said because a lot of it I didn't know. My membership is an older membership, we've been around for 70 years, predominantly Vietnam era guys, and they vote absentee or they vote in person. The new Veteran, these Veterans that are from Afghanistan and Iraqi wars, it's a whole different ball game. They're used to technology, they're used to things happening on an immediate level. And you're right; a lot of these guys are coming back with catastrophic disabilities.

You know, TBI, as you mentioned. One of the big things is amputees, whether it's legs or arms or hands or partial, different types of amputees, just listening to some of the problems we're talking about, what I was wondering is did you find a solution that using like dragon where they could actually verbally do the ballot as opposed to having to push the button or what have you. I don't know if that was an option in your program. But, you know, working with the VA also.

You know, there are a lot of guys that are in VA hospitals or VA nursing homes or still in the VA, you know, that have been discharged from DOT, they've done some rehab, they get their services through VA, VA as you know is a demand-response. You have to ask that I want to be registered or I have to vote at that time.

TVA is a Veterans service organization has worked with the League of Women Voters in some aspects like in one of our chapters out in Washington state did a registration drive at one time years ago when they went into the facility and got some guys registered, and then ensured that they voted at that time, you know, when the election came around.

That opportunity still per persists. One of the things I guess the state or your local jurisdictions can do is just understand what the rules and the regs are at the VA.

Because you just can't walk in and say here I am, you know, because their main function is health care. Make sure that the Veteran goes through proper rehabilitation, he's there for health care, you know, whether he's an outpatient or a day patient or somebody inpatient.

And you're right, voting with these guys getting out, it's not on their top 10 list. You know, and unfortunately candidate apathy, that type of stuff, too. But anyway, fact of the matter is voting is so important. For our Veterans, but for everyone in general. You know, it's how we elect our officials, it's the people that represent us, and it's how everything gets done.

So yeah, I don't know if I've answered your question or not.

>> Absolutely.

>> But anyway.

>> I'm going to pose this to you but really for the whole panel. As you talk about engaging and understanding the rules and the regs of the VA or other, you know, federal entities that may be helpful one of the questions that I have that perhaps the election officials who have engaged in some of this outreach can touch on, including yourself Mr. Page, is I want to pick up the phone, I want to get started on a program, I want to understand what this landscape looks like, and how to serve Veterans with disabilities.

What's the first call I make, what's my approach to begin to even have that conversation, to create a program or a service? So I'd start with you, but anyone should feel free to weigh in on. And what are the beginnings, how do I even get started to tackle these challenges. Ms. Wagoner, do you have --

>> Yes, the Veterans in Virginia, I reached out actually to the person, the chaplain, that heads the VA, and also had him come in, and he learned how to register his people, or anyone he could help, he was certified to do that after we finished training him. And we do offer that program to anyone. And it works.

And the chaplain we felt there was no partisan involved, so we thought that was a good person to reach out to. And he also knew at home, Veterans with disabilities. As well as in the VA hospitals.

>> Mr. Ross, as you started your program, you know, you took it from being at a car dealership, right? And an idea to having their back, to making it a reality. What were the initial steps you took to kind of create that program, understand the challenges of Veterans with disabilities, and then scope a program that could serve them?

>> Sure. What -- I think the first key we had is we really didn't know a lot, and that would probably be a terrible commercial. But we knew enough to at least try and get some expertise. So we worked with Rick Shannon at the Iowa developmental disabilities council and he was just extremely helpful. And so if you're an election agency I think you need to find that partner in that agency partner or that organization that will come on alongside you and kind of work with you and kind of help you think things through. You know, if you're an organization out there, I would encourage you to look at the Secretary of State in each state that or the person that oversees elections or if it's local, the county, there's a county person.

And so develop a relationship with them, kind of come alongside them. We're always looking for expertise, and so Rick was an expert. We would write something up and say hey Rick, look at this, what do you think, do we have the language right, am I saying the right -- am I saying something offensive, because I don't want to. Help me see through that stuff and help me see that, and what isn't explained.

And Rick was great; he helped us and made suggestions. He kind of had that servant leadership, which I think was great, it wasn't -- and he wasn't adversarial, and he stayed off Twitter, so could ask questions in a safe space. Because there are some questions out here that if we ask, and then all of a sudden it gets picked up and then gets on Twitter and everything else. And then just exploring new ways to do the work, I thought that was very helpful.

So again, if you're an organization out there, become an expert and come alongside an agency and offer to help them. It may take some trust factor, it may take some relationship, but eventually who knows what kind of ideas we have to come together when we do the work together.

>> Are there opportunities, Scott, where election office, who you're already familiar with, but at the state and local level, can work with you at that transition period to identify those voters who are transitioning and share best practices and information from the point that they're active duty to the point where they become Veterans and need these services? What kind of opportunities can they have to interact with you all at FVAP to kind of bridge that gap as we heard that exists in that transition?

>> So that's a good question, because we don't have a lot of databases necessarily on the votes that are in that particular area at that moment because it's so ongoing, in fact happening fast. A lot of the defense manpower data senior databases, or stuff are several weeks old so it may not be that fresh especially when we're coming upon the election. But I would go back to what FVAP does best, which is communicating. And encouraging election officials state and local to communicate as at many points through the process with the voters, so that when they're healthy or not healthy or you're designing systems for folks to be able to communicate with you and get a form to you to say hi I'm in the military I'm in the going to be home for the election I need you to send me the ballot to where I am, to capture that information and get out to them, say we received it you're going to get your ballot on this day and time. And then whatever their situation may be, they'll be able to continue that outreach and know that the ballot is on to them.

Plus with the delivery electronically of the ballot via email, it's more -- it would be whatever their situation is, they might be able to then get to that ballot if they're in a hospital, versus having to worry about it being sent to them in an overseas location or somewhere else and then having to find its way back to them in the paper process. So having it done electronically, getting the blank ballot to them, could be very helpful.

The issue then is what their disabilities are, what their issues are as opposed to

being -- in relation to being able to use that computer, and complete the ballot itself. And what kind of assistive technologies might be required.

>> So and I think this question probably goes to Daniel at least first, and that is, as we look at this population, you know, typically when we just talk generally about voters with disabilities, there's kind of this question around how many identify as even having disabilities or will avail themselves to these resources. As you did the research kind of looking at the challenges that Veterans with disabilities face, is this a more identifiable population? Do they avail themselves to resources within elections, outside of elections, as needing that kind of help? And how can we help sort of reach out to that population to say these resources are available to you, and you should know what those are.

>> Yeah, I mean, I think first of all there's multiple types of voters so, you know, that is was definitely one finding. So one type of voter that would fall under that umbrella would be voters that are in long-term care facilities. Whether they're older Veterans or recently injured and they're receiving treatment. And you know, here they're often in these facilities for significant periods of time. And one of the findings that we had that was important here is that although, you know, these facilities are accessible, the individual themselves may not have significant mobility within that facility, for various reasons. And so when you're looking at solutions, you really have to talk about bringing the voting booth to the individual. And being able to really be inside, you know, any facility that's within your jurisdiction. You need to figure out how you can actually get inside that. Because the voter is often not going to be able to go offsite.

More than that, even if you set up a voting, you know, room somewhere in the facility, that might not be good enough. You actually might have to be bringing it to them bedside. So for that population we found it was really important to think about how you actually basically get into the room if they want you there. How do you get them the information, how do you get it of course not just to them but to their family members who are often their support. Or any of the other organizations that are providing that care.

Then we have to, you know, look at poll worker training. That was a big issue that came across in our research not only on military Veterans, but also just for people with disabilities overall that too often the barriers were we had great policies we had great procedures we had great technology in place, everything was kind of there, but then it was the individual experience, the individual encounter that went wrong, right? And that really matters because those stories, people talk to each other, they say, you know, I tried to vote it didn't work, I'm not going to try again, right?

So you need to really make sure you're getting that right. And poll worker training is how you get -- you know, to get to Michael's point about not saying something offensive, right? It's that poll worker training that you can kind of educate people. Because most of the poll workers when we're talking to them in our research, of course most of them really want to do the right thing. But they weren't familiar with the concepts, they weren't familiar with the specific needs that a Veteran might have. They also weren't familiar with the fact that someone might not present themselves as being a person with a disability or being a Veteran.

So, you know, there are ways to get around that by, you know, not making certain assumptions, by having material available to people ahead of time so that they can make the decision themselves whether they want to identify a certain way. Or, you know, just really have a universally accessible process so that it works for everyone and they can accommodate their own needs.

One of the consistent findings we also had, when we talk about the types of solutions that are useful for people with disabilities, for example again if you go to online voter registration, same day registration, these types of issues that when we did research it was significantly statistically significant impact on these populations, right? If you talk about improving accessibility, these are things you have to do, if you want to have an impact.

But of course those are things that are really convenient to all voters. So you know, there's this kind of double wind there where you don't necessarily have to say I'm disabled and I want to vote early. You can just say I need to vote early, and it helps

everyone and you don't have to -- you know, kind of reveal that private information about yourself to be able to receive this basic benefit.

>> If I could answer --

>> Yeah, absolutely.

>> Yeah, I can understand, I think everything you said is spot on. And as a disabled person myself, I vote every time. But, you know, a gravel parking lot can be a disincentive just by itself, because somebody in a wheelchair can't transverse across the gravel parking lot. And if the parking is not there, they can just say drive by, screw it, go home, forget about it. We try to advocate the vote in person; absentee is always there. But yeah, I think a lot of -- I know a poll worker's job is hard and thankless to a degree, it starts at 6:00 in the morning and goes to -- or even earlier and later, and it's a whole day long.

And so yeah, especially training when it comes to the machine. Right now I think I'm voting on an optical scan in Fairfax county and at one time after HAVA we had gone to electric -- not electric, but electronic voting machines, and then they ended up purchasing, going back to the optical scan.

And for people with limited hand dexterities, someone who is blind, I don't think those ballots really work for those persons.

I've never been offered anything else but the optical scan when I've gone to the poll. I didn't even know where the -- and I know that the requirements are one electronic voting machine per polling place is supposed to in place and ready and available upon request.

You know, that was one of the true goals of HAVA back in the day, is universality, so we could all vote in the same manner at the same time, so it would be kind of uniform. Unfortunately, electronic voting was deemed as having problems, and so security got involved and needless to say, here we are.

But yeah, there's still just physical barriers that the polls in certain areas, we try to ensure that all physical access is there; if not, you've got to move the poll to a place that is more accessible. But, you know, there are still areas you probably can't get away from, in the heart of, you know, Philadelphia or New York where you're, you know, voting at a row house or something like that. But I'm not -- you know, these things we can't get away from. So.

>> Ms. Wagoner?

>> Yes, in Virginia we looked at 2016, trying to see how can we improve for our Veterans, disabled persons, and what we did, each -- we have 133 localities, which include 2700 precincts. So 30 days or less prior to the election, each precinct is inspected per ADA requirements. If there are any changes that need to be made, they will be made. If this polling place is not accessible, an extreme accessibility problem, then we go to an emergency polling place to be reassigned.

So we want the Veteran, the person, anyone that's voting on election day, to feel comfortable and to be able to come in and express their desire to vote, and do it with total, total ability to get into that polling place.

Also, we have a new program; it's called the liaison program. We are assigned to each locality, and what we do quarterly is we actually visit each general registrar's office. And in August that will be our next visit, and we will be checking their offices for availability for accessibility. We will be questioning them, to be sure that that 45 day period of election, which is called absentee voting in Virginia, that it also is accessible. For that voter.

>> Go ahead.

>> I just wanted to add part of the research you guys funded in the second round; we actually did make an online poll worker training class to help poll workers with disabilities. It's free; anyone can access it. It's licensed to be redistributed in other modules if you want to incorporate it into your own system. So I just wanted to mention that, a great resource.

>> I appreciate you mentioning that. And that's again available on our website, your website, to share and use. And actually it leads to my next question, which is as the election officials and your organization looks at attacking this, election officials, whether it's challenges for Veterans with disabilities, just voters with disabilities, or quite frankly, just challenges for voters, they're constantly hammered this with you need poll worker training you need better trained poll workers which I think there isn't an election official alive that wouldn't like to offer that but time, money everything else constrains it.

So one of the questions I have is there an opportunity here to do some outreach and recruit some poll workers, particularly Veterans with disabilities, to be poll workers, to serve on election day in some way, whether as greeters, whatever else, to help bridge that education gap, to have someone in the polling place familiar with the challenges that Veterans with disabilities face in the polling place.

>> Well, I think training of poll workers is extremely important. You want to be prepared. Because it doesn't happen very often, but you know, a successful -- to be able to facilitate the vote of a veteran or a disabled voter, that is a wonderful experience. If it goes wrong and there's lack of preparedness, it can be -- it can go south real quick. And that's not how we want our poll workers to be trained. So there's opportunities to do that training using -- you know, online training, for poll workers, which I know a lot of states already do.

And just sort of explaining why it's so important that they're prepared, that they understand how to use the accessibility equipment, and that's why it's there, is for when individuals come so they can vote privately and independently.

>> I'm sorry, go ahead.

>> So one of the things that we did is we put together -- we have four different machines that allows someone with disability to see or to mark the ballots, and the counties can choose between the four, so we did two sets of videos, one set was for the voters so they could see ahead of time what does that machine look

like, how does it work. But then the second thing we did, for each of the machines is a little two minute for the poll workers, this is the machine, this is the plug this is where the plug goes this is how you turn it on this is the things that you do. And got some positive feedback with that, because sometimes the poll workers, you know, had the machines they just sit there, and this is an opportunity for the county auditor in their training to actually show the poll workers exactly the way the machine works and each -- you know, specific step.

So even those simple things, how do you turn it on, how do you plug it in, I think helps the poll workers. Because it's their intent, I think they want to do the right thing, but that training is critical.

>> I think relationships with those organizations, building those relationships with the -- you know, Veteran organizations and Veterans with disability organizations, can help recruitment of individuals who understand some of these issues, are more attuned to them.

>> That's what --

>> Oh, okay.

>> That's a great idea.

>> Perfect.

>> A, if you can get a Veteran with a disability to be a poll worker or greeter or if you can get anybody with a disability to be a poll worker or a greeter, you know, there again it's education and outreach. It's -- and you know, for persons with disabilities you could go to the independent living centers and work with them to find out what their needs are and if they can be out and working the polls.

For the Veteran you can go to the Veterans Service Organization such as myself or the VFW or the Legion or a whole host of different ones that represent Veterans. And not only disabled Veterans, older Veterans, you know, Veterans who are

retired and have time to be poll workers.

But, you know, and then also -- and the VA also. Just, you know, talk about this is -- you know, this is -- election day is November 2nd or the eighth or whichever Tuesday it is, and talk about the whole process of what's going on that day, and the actual need of -- need for poll workers, and the advantage why you're really looking for a Veteran with a disability to be a poll worker at that time. And that way people will, you know, say hey, you're right maybe I will volunteer and stand up and do that.

>> One thing you've absolutely flagged for me that quite honestly my mind set in part because of reading some of the research is that a Veteran with a disability may be a Veteran coming off of -- you know, transitioning from active duty into Veteran status that's recently injured, but could also be, you know, a Vietnam war Veteran, a World War II Veteran, that like you said, may have the time and ability to serve, and help educate in that way.

So to me that is a wonderful point. There may be a hidden pool of poll workers out there for us.

>> Right.

>> That election officials are always looking for, right? And just identifying those partnerships. Let's go Daniel then Scott.

>> I was just going to say I love this idea of bringing in more poll workers with disabilities. One thing that we did find in our research, though, and I think those of you especially that are working with this population might want to think about, when we talk to folks who are active duty, you know, within any company, any group, you had someone who was the -- you had someone in the company who was responsible, right, for assisting the rest of the troops with voting.

We found that that position was generally -- you know, delegated to someone who was a low performer. And so it was seen as a bad job to get, right? It was seen as

something you give to a person that you don't kind of basically respect as much. And I think that might color the culture of people coming out of that.

Because they see the person that helps with voting as the person that that's the job you give to the person that can't do the other jobs. And we need to fix that culture early on in the military so that people coming out of that are -- you know, are respecting that position, are recognizing the value of that position. And you know, I think that will influence your ability to recruit later on.

So you know, that's not something that you can necessarily easily change immediately from the outside. When we talk about kind of the impact and the challenges you might face recruiting, I think that might be an issue you face.

>> Scott.

>> To your point, the voting assistance officer position is a collateral duty for sure in the military. We do have folks who volunteer for it, so out of the that pool of all those voting assistant officers at the unit level, installation level, we have a lot of folks that are very excited about doing it and do a great job at it. There are a few folks that it might not be their first priority of what to do. And a lot of that comes from the command support. If the installation commander is saying this is a priority for me, then everyone on that installation is going to make the voting or the elections process a priority for them.

Keeping in mind we don't tell people they have to vote, we want to make sure they understand that they are able to vote, they have the ability to vote, and we have the tools and resources available for them if they choose to vote. So we want to make sure that's clear to them, as well.

But to tag on the other point, as far as local election officials as we know are more and more becoming IT professionals these days than ever before, and those relationships with the Veterans organizations, having Veterans, wounded Veterans, or any Veterans working at the polls, is a pool of folks that when those individuals are buying new equipment, which I know a lot of people are looking at doing now

in the short term, ask for those vendors to bring their equipment on site and have those people try to use it. How does it work, what accommodations do you have, technical accommodations that are available already. You have a pool of folks there that can help so you that when you're making a decision you can make sure you're providing as many accommodations as possible before making that big decision for purchasing which could last five to 10 years, I'm not sure what the latest time frame on it is, I don't want to get into that.

>> I love the suggestion -- yeah, go ahead.

>> Just one thing on the voting assistance officer. I think it's very important. And I'm very sympathetic to them, because think about this, you are there to help, you know, everybody at the table who is in a different state, with a different way of voting and different laws, and you're responsible for helping that soldier, sailor, get their absentee ballot, read the rules, and make sure you do everything correct. It's sort of complicated. And that raises the importance of the federal voting assistance program, to sort of be there as well.

But that puts the onus back on the state, a lot. Because what it requires is that we work with our voters as much as we can, getting that information out early, so they have some independent way of knowing, so they don't maybe have to rely as much on the voting officer or the federal voting system program. All together, though, I think that we have a good shot at getting them the information they need when they need it so that they can get their ballot voted. But that is a tough job to have, and I have a lot of respect for the voting assistance officers.

>> Yeah, go.

>> Best partnership, Federal Voters Assistance Program, thank you very much for that. Been able to lean on you many times in Virginia.

But one thing I have an advantage in Virginia is that I'm very close to my registrars. When I hear a problem is going on in a voting site, I'm going to drill down and find out why.

One of the problems that we found was there were certain people trained for certain pieces of equipment. They were not cross-training, so if that person didn't show up election day, whoops. And that especially was an accessibility equipment. So we have changed that throughout. The training now has to be cross-trained. All peoples involved in that particular election site must be trained on accessibility, as well.

>> Yeah, two thoughts that kind of reflect back on what you all just said, which I think are important. One is this recognition of the voting assistance officers, and that's the structure that many of these folks are coming out of, and perhaps identifying both the challenges in that structure, but also maybe a way to take advantage of that. Is there a way essentially for a state or local to set up a similar structure with advocacy organizations or other Veterans minded groups, so it's a familiar structure and approach to the -- to the Vet transitioning out or, you know, coming and trying to educate themselves.

But two, and this is a fantastic point, is taking advantage of Veterans groups, advocacy groups, to engage in the RFP process. To engage in not just voting systems, but the e-poll book process, the purchase of ballot delivery systems, things like that, so that you're engaging that group. Quite frankly, it's not just a good practice, it's a good source of folks, but it's a good talking point to say we've reached out to a variety of organizations including Veterans groups.

>> On your first point I was an attorney in the military for a long time, so one of my duties, when people come in the military they go to a new command or they leave, we want to make that individual as prepared as possible for whatever transition they're going into. So for a long time I provided legal advice. I would (inaudible) voting advice. And I think that should become -- that was a recommendation (inaudible).

-- Their rights and responsibilities are with regards to voting and the options they might have. When they're transitioning out of the military or transitioning from the VA, they are able to understand these are your rights, these are your

responsibilities, these are the options that you have. And we're here to help, and here's your local registrar's name.

That's what I always encourage the local election officials, wherever they are, to if they have a base, you know, build that relationship with the voting assistance officer. I know it might be a little intimidating to call the military base and say I'm here to help -- I'm here to help, I really am, I want to give you the dates, the important information. But sort of providing that holistic information to a Veteran that's leaving into the civilian world, no matter their circumstances, giving that voting information is really important. Because they'll be prepared for life as a civilian. Not just the legal, not just the health care, but also the voting.

>> Yeah, and I wonder, Scott, you may either reflect on this or tell me no, which happens to me frequently, but I wonder if there's not an opportunity, I know in Ohio we create add program for active duty military where the goal was to put in their hands everything they needed to get registered and receive their ballot before they're deployed. And I wonder if there's not a way to create a similar program as they transition from active duty to Veteran status and really provide that packet, everything you need in order to have that, in order to just put it in one place, to educate.

So that may be an opportunity, as well. Yeah, of course.

>> One of the jobs that I have is keeping up with the VAOs. You know the voting assistance officers move around quite a bit. So I have a quarterly calendar that I actually call each base to be sure that I'm kept 1 that particular officer.

And they appreciate. And then I supply them with the newest forms, because as we all know, forms do change. So that has really -- I've acquired quite a friendship William of them and it's worked really well in Virginia for us.

>> That's a great best practice. Let's get into a couple -- we've touched on them a little bit, Daniel I know you've mentioned a couple, but we'll start with Daniel and then I want to give both Michael and Terry a chance to brag a little bit about your

programs. But Daniel, three big takeaways, three things that election officials can do right now or, you know, heading into 2018 for really improving services for Veterans with disabilities. What's the research show you?

>> Yeah, so number one, again, these best practices. We've identified the best practices for all people with disabilities have to be in place for Veterans. If you don't have that, so it's the accessible polling place, it's the online voter registration, same day registration, it's the -- you know, the information ahead of time about the polling place so you can look online and see if there's a gravel parking lot, you can look online and see where the accessible parking is, all that information has to be out there needs to be accessible needs to be in multiple languages all those best practices.

Second is the poll working training, that has to be at the top because that's the person to person interaction ends up being the critical link to success, right? I won't say the criminal cause of failure because I want to have a positive set there. It really makes a difference.

And the last is getting into those facilities. It's really -- there are voters who are going to be in long-term care facilities either receiving treatment immediately or because they're there for the long haul. And you need to have that relationship with those facilities ahead of time, you need to be able to go in there, have the conversations. And this is the most important part of it. I mean, Michael, the way you described the way you're proceeding with your program I think is exactly the model that you want to see everywhere, which is that you're out there talking to, you know, the people with disabilities, you're out there talking with specific voters with this need, and that's what I think as well Terry as what you described, I mean that's exactly what we found in this process. The only way to address the very specific needs that are always changing, right? That's the other thing we have to remember. Some of the combat injuries are more or less stabilized depending on the type of war they were in, but the specific needs actually do change. It changes because the voting process changes, the technology is changing, people's expectations are change.

So always being in there and having those conversations allows us to continuously update the voting process. Continue to innovate in the voting process so that we're, you know, meeting the needs. And that last part getting that feedback, making sure you're understanding okay these are the needs this is where it went right this is where it went wrong this is how we're going to try to do it next time and getting that cycle going I think is one of the most critical parts of this.

It's not enough to just say we did our program a couple years ago and now we're fixed. No, we put in a process, we put in place a process that allows us to continuously innovate in this area, continuously figure out how we can improve. Because that's the only way you're going to have long term success.

>> So new Terry I'll start with you and then Michael. Why don't you just talk us through a little bit about your programs, how you all in Virginia are tackling some of the challenges for Veterans with disabilities, and the work that you're doing.

>> Well, number one is me, I'm a direct line, I take all calls. And take them seriously. The one thing I would like to say on the upside of this is that most Veterans that I speak with, and I do meet with them as well personally, want to vote in person. I found that really great.

But we also have our online absentee applications available and even people with disabilities -- people have the wrong idea that they're not savvy. They are savvy on the computers; trust me. So they can pretty much get through the computer and do the online application as well. To have the ballot mailed to them.

And this has been a great, great success through the 2016 election especially.

>> Michael, why don't you talk about the program you all established?

>> Sure.

>> I know you touched on it a little bit, but some of the details of the work you're doing both on the outreach end and then the kind of technological work that

you're doing with your county administrators.

>> Sure. So one of the things that we discovered is that we would go to each -- you know, to the Veterans organization, the American Legion, tried to work with them, then we started to trying to find are there other organizations. So assisted living is an outreach that we did. We knew that assisted living has a large population, but the good percent of those are Veterans.

So we -- and assisted living program directors are looking for programs, so we put together some videos and encourage them to do some training or some service, you know, within the assisted living.

So we were looking for areas where do veterans hang out. That maybe is not the VFW, but how can we reach them? So we continue to kind of explore that.

One of the things that we discovered a little later, too, was with a large number of Veterans with PTSD; the curbside voting was something that was important. And how it came about is we were out educating one of the organizations that works with people with disabilities at a press conference, she announced to us she said look, my son had PTSD, came back, was diagnosed, committed suicide, and but then she kind of went back, she said I wish I would have known that he could have voted curbside because he had difficulty associating with people, with crowds of people.

And not that being able to vote would have anything to do with the outcome that happened with him, but just for that mom she just said I wish I would have known that, I wish I would have let him -- because he was very patriotic, he wanted to do his duty, and just -- just couldn't vote. And that was a thing she struggled with.

So and then I think the other thing that we learned, and that we started to work on, and we'd love for some more assistance and help in that, is we kind of went from the frame you had our back, you know, now we have yours, to just the idea that soldiers never leave anybody on the battlefield, they always go back for them. So we ended up towards the end putting together some social media and the tag line

was more of the idea that you fought for our rights, now help your fellow Veterans or your Veterans with disabilities vote.

So I think that's a path that we'd like to go down, I think we use the words protect what we fought for, help a disabled Veteran vote.

So again we're just constantly looking and suggesting, and would love for assistance. One of the things that we came across, which really didn't have as much to do with Veterans with disabilities, but in general, was a tool for county administrators, that administer elections. So we have 1700 precincts and 99 county officials, and it was Franklin Ohio and they had this EAC meeting that one of our election staff were at and saw this great program Ohio had so we ended up seeing if we could borrow it. Basically the concept was it's an ADA tablet that each county auditor can use as a resource tool and it just lists all of their counties.

So I brought it, and I found one county that had four precincts, so that's a lot easier than having 600 or 800 precincts, but hopefully you guys are seeing that. But it's a basic survey, and you have your list of counties, and then you have the survey, and then you just go -- and you just go through the questions, and is it compliant or not. And then it kind of tells you how many spaces, and you know, do you have, you can always put notes in there. If it's not compliant you can say no, and then you can type you know, a note, you know, need more space or whatever you want.

But what it also does is it allows you to, as you're going through things, look at okay, I need cones or multiple cones, you know, how do we do that.

So hopefully you guys picked up --

>> Yep, it's up on the screen.

>> Able to see that.

>> Just quickly as you show this demo, is it correct, this is distributed to auditors across the entire state, this module, and they go and assess the polling locations?

>> Yes. So each auditor goes, assesses it, and here's kinds of the neat thing, they can take pictures, so what happens when the 99-year-old precinct elected official retires and an 88-year-old election official takes over, which is probably our average, and we love them, not only do they have a report, but they can also see the pictures and where it goes. So it's a great tool for the counties to see what they need to make sure they're in compliance. In that if there's any questions, it gives the best practices I think that you guys put out.

And so a great tool that we're able to give each of the 99 counties to help them make sure they're compliant. And we thank Franklin county for coming up with this great program.

>> Yeah, it's a really cool tool, it's a really cool program it's got two things I love about it, one is it has scalability across the state with your auditors, and two, it was based in Ohio to start. So that's always -- that's always a good start as far as I'm concerned.

But it's -- you all are to be commended for the work you've done on this to incorporate it state-wide. And quite frankly incorporating it into your larger program, serving Veterans with disabilities. Because you're right, this is going to help all voters with disabilities, frankly it's going to help all voters.

But then it ties in with the program and your commitment to having their back, right? And how that ties in. So just a really cool program, really cool concept. And I think something that, as we've talked about, we've shared from an EAC perspective, as a best practice. And my guess is saves time and money for your auditors, as well, as opposed to the painful checklist process that many county officials have to go through.

Does anyone else have any kind of additional best practice thought to add as far as techniques? Whether it's outreach or technology, to use in serving Veterans with disabilities? Go ahead.

>> I think one best practice is, you know, particularly at the state level, but also localities, is usually in the legislature there's going to be a military or Veterans or individuals with disabilities caucus. And if there are -- as technologies change and sort of you see needs arising, that we can meet, but perhaps the code doesn't allow it the code needs to be tweaked, the statute. Talking to those caucuses, they are very eager to help. And if you can provide, you know, potential legislation or policies that might help, I think they're willing to carry a lot of water.

And frankly they also have a lot of contacts with the disability community and also the Veteran organizations. And so it's great to sort of interact with those caucuses. They're bipartisan, they're all focused on the same goal, and they're looking for ways to help Veterans with disabilities.

>> Yeah, go ahead.

>> We found on our application, to comment to Don, that we were asking the reason of the disability. Well, last year we were successful in removing that through caucusing in the legislation. And that made it far more comfortable for the person with disabilities just to mark to a disability. Exactly your point, Don.

>> Lee, I was going to ask you as a follow up to that exact thought.

>> Sure.

>> Which is as you go out and you educate legislators, lawmakers, funders, appropriators, what kind of advice do you have for election officials in both parenting with groups like yours, but messaging in the importance of serving these voters, and the resources necessary?

I think for a lot of election officials one of the biggest challenges is there's a lot they'd like to do.

>> Right.

>> There's not an election official I know that wouldn't like to provide better services.

>> Sure.

>> To voters with disabilities. But they don't have the resources. So what advice do you have on that?

>> Well, that's true, you know, elections are a state and local deal and it always seems to be underfunded. And overworked. And so yeah, you're always trying to promote the issue, promote the elections, promote voting, promote the fact that, you know, Veterans with disabilities, all people with disabilities, you know, need to be educated, they need to be registered, and they need to get out and vote.

And when it comes to our elected officials up on the federal level, you're trying to explain to them the need that, you know, the system is not broke, it just needs help. So that's something you can always promote.

>> So one final question, I'll put it to Daniel to start, and then Scott you may have some research on this, and then we're going to start with you, Michael, and go around the table with some concluding thoughts, kind of your last thought on either a practice that you recommend, or what you've learned. Some lessons learned. We'll start with Michael and go around the table, and then conclude.

But before that, one of my final questions is we've talked about physical injuries, voters with disabilities. One of the I think unique parts of your findings and your research, Daniel, is the challenges to folks with cognitive disabilities. And those are at times a lot harder for poll workers obviously to identify, it's a growing list of challenges that folks with cognitive disabilities face, so I wonder if you could speak specifically to some of the findings you had with folks with cognitive disabilities and some of the steps election officials can take specifically for those folks. You've mentioned kind of the overwhelming environment of the polling place at times, you've touched on some of these. But specifically on folks with cognitive disabilities, what your research shows and steps folks can take.

>> Yeah absolutely. When you talk about Veterans, that's just because the type of injury that we're seeing, that's a big issue. So with cognitive disabilities there are a number of problems that voters might have. You know, successfully completing an election. One is just all the information around elections. The concentration problems, the challenges of information overload, the challenge of the fact that just again in their daily life they might have information overload, and this is just something else. So the need to have a support process.

Part of it is also the ability to successfully complete a ballot. So a lot of voters with cognitive disabilities are going to have challenges with coming to the -- you know, coming to actually go and vote and, you know, knowing who they want to vote for. They need to be able to bring something into the ballot booth with them and have that information with them, and have it in a way that is usable to them based on their specific, other impairments they might have. They might have some challenges, you know, writing and marking and doing other things.

As we talked about the environment is very important and figuring out those issues is important. And finally, issues with deadlines. Just all the kind of cognitive work that goes into actually figuring out I need to do these 10 steps to be able to vote I need to register by this date I need to show up by this date I need to ahead of time looked up who to vote for. All that information, it's a lot to process, it can be difficult. Again, because of memory challenges or concentration challenges.

And you know, so then in terms of steps to make that available, there's a number of things that election officials can and are beginning to do. One is of course simplifying all the information. Whether it's signage at the polling place or the voter information that's sent out. Really working on plain English, and getting that tested and reviewed so that it's simple for the user to use.

Second is assessing the environment. Really trying to figure out, you know, are we doing everything we need to make this the best environment we can. Recognizing that of course, you know, you're often at the mercy of the different facilities you have to use, you don't really have control over, but what things can you put in place

to adjust that. What can you get the voter ahead of time so that they're prepared themselves for where they're going?

So it's different for the voter, if they have to be in a noisy environment, but they know there's a wait. If they can get those wait times ahead of times, if they can get the predicted wait times, so they know well if you want to go when it's less busy go between these hours. That kind of information can be highly valuable.

And so, you know, all of those things kind of I think come together. The last is that, you know, making the information modular that you're providing so that other, you know, other groups who are providing this information to Veterans can actually take your information and provide it. So Lee's group, maybe there's a particular issue that his population has, he maybe doesn't want to hand out all of your voter information, he wants to hand out the paragraph that says specifically, you know, this facility is optimized for wheelchairs or this facility is optimized for, you know, blind voters or something like that.

You want to make sure that information is incredibly modular so people can extract what they need. We're seeing people start to innovate with interesting mobile apps and other things in this space. But the only way that works is if that information is out there for other people to use.

>> Go ahead, did you have anything else?

>> No.

>> Daniel, thank you. And I think one of the good pieces of good news that we've seen in the election space as a whole, but feeds into exactly what you were just saying, is election officials are using technology to innovate in a lot of different ways. I mean, there is more information available to voters now than there's ever been. So now it's understanding how to best provide that information in an understandable way and in a timely way when it's most relevant. And I think election officials are constantly looking at how to best do that. So that voters, whether it's Veterans with disabilities or just voters in general, have the information

they need, in a way they want it and a way they consume it. So I'm going to start with Michael -- did you have something? Go ahead.

>> Go ahead.

>> Start with Michael, just kind of some concluding thoughts, commentary that you have, we'll work our way around.

>> Sure. Just kind of short, Secretary Pate has expanded our Honor the Veteran program, where what we're doing is actively going out, thanking Veterans for defending our right to vote, sending them a lapel pin, reminding them to vote. But we hired a coordinator that spent three months on the road; told her to get outside of Des Moines, don't come back. Ended up doing 40, 50 states, she may even be running for President. Just kidding. But asked what's the most rewarding thing, having spent time all this time out there, and she said it's a very simple thing. She was in Davenport, Iowa, just did a workshop, and a Veteran came up to her, he was a 30-year-old Army Vet, 65 years old, had been registered to vote but just had never cast his ballot to vote.

And it was on a Saturday, and our election offices are open on a Saturday, so he just wanted to let her know that he was going to walk across the street down to the county courthouse and vote for the first time. And so for Tina, our coordinator who spent probably five, six months of her life and three months on the road, the most important thing was this one Veteran that actually went out and actually voted.

So I think that's kind of a great take away that I kind of wanted to leave. So.

>> Thank you for sharing that story, and thank you, to you and Secretary Pate for your commitment to serving Veterans with disabilities, voters with disabilities, the outreach and work you've done. The program you have is fantastic, and it's a model to be shared across the United States. So I appreciate your time, and that story I think reflects what any election official that serves voters, in particular both military voters and voters with disabilities, the power of watching that first time voting freely and independently, or really getting that ballot to them when they

think perhaps they're not going to be able to get that ballot, it's what drives I think election official to continue to improve and serve. Because there's no more powerful experience than that, just no question about that. So thank you, appreciate it. Don?

>> I think there are controls that you can control and then there's things you cannot control. And as a state election official, we're able to experiment. And we had HHS and HAVA dollars to sort of how can we focus our program, what do we want to do. What's the need, and how can we meet that need. And use the available resources for it.

For those things that you can control, for example if, you know, there's an individual with a disability, a Veteran with a disability, they may have a caregiver. We may not be able to help them directly sometimes, but we can give the information to those that can, so they understand what services are available.

And I've seen that work wonderfully, where we weren't able to give that direct assistance, but we pushed and gave that information to those that could. And the individual was served in the end and that's what counts.

>> That's a great point. Identifying those channels, whatever they may be, to get that information, and really enfranchise those folks is critical. Don, thank you for being here and sharing your experience. Daniel?

>> Yeah, I just want to emphasize again the kind of important role that technology and innovation have in this space. Last month was the 10-year birthday of the iPhone, right? I mean, how old is that, we kind of look sight of how quickly things change. And when we're talking about the future of voting, how we're going to make it accessible, it's going be on these devices, going to be this technology that you can really pick up and bring the people. It's going to be the technology everyone is used to using, that they're familiar with, that they expect government services to be delivered on.

And I think we constantly have to be challenging ourselves, just like the private

sector does. How are we going to use the latest technology out there to deliver the best experience for the voter for our customer?

And you know one of those trends is, you know, personalization. I think especially when you're talking about people with disabilities, this really gets to, you know, some of the core challenges that we've always confronted where personalization isn't me saying this is my disability, it's me saying, you know, I need to have an accessible entrance, I need to be able to vote in a quiet environment. I need to receive my, you know, voter information in this way. And be able to do that once. When I go, fly with an airline I don't have to tell them each time my meal preference, my aisle preference, I tell them once and that profile is created about me and I expect that to be there.

And this is the kind of thing that of course people are getting in all sorts of areas because of data and technology and how companies work today. And we have to incorporate that into government, we have to incorporate that into voting. And I think that trend, though, will very much serve well all voters, but especially people with disabilities.

>> Yeah I think it's a really well made point. I think election officials more and more are focused on that voter experience, right? And providing that experience that voters are looking for in the process and how to best do that. I had an election official recently raise to me the possibilities of virtual reality and augmented reality in the voting process. And I thought oh my God, let's just modernize the technology where we've got it now. But it's a fair question, right? As voters are interacting with new technology, sort of what are the opportunities there.

So Daniel, thank you for your time, thank you for your research and the partnership with the EAC and the information you shared. Again, all the research that Daniel did is part of the military here, his project is available here at EAC.gov and shared out there with best practices, the training module you mentioned for poll workers. Thank you for being here and sharing that. Scott.

>> I would just close out by reiterating when states are creating new processes or

new systems like online or automatic voter registration, to consider not only the UOCAVA voters, so they are part of that so they can be designated as such, but also the voters with disabilities, as we talked about before. Working with the relationships with the military Veterans communities and organizations, as well as the disability organizations to make sure that those things are out there.

And take advantage of us where we can, call FVAP.gov, we have a staff at our website, or call our office or go to FVAP.gov. We have folks that go to the state meetings where the counties come in, let us know that these situations are occurring, then we can try to help where we can.

We do have access to some DoD resources using the common access card, some of the databases there where we can, piggyback on that functionality, we're happy to do so.

>> Awesome. And thank you, Scott, for being here and for the partnership that the EAC and FVAP have in serving overseas and military voters as well as tackling this project and this information, I appreciate it.

Terry.

>> Yes, oh, I have learned a lot today. Thank you, gentlemen. One thing that I'm going to do, you all have opened my brains and eyes, to a new training program. Sensitivity. To the needs. And I think I'd like to share that with all my 133 general registrars, and also within the agency itself. Sensitivity.

>> Terry, thank you for being here and the work that you do to serve these folks. It's really an inspiration.

>> Thank you.

>> Lee, you're last, which is always the hardest spot to be, but I'm also going to put you on the spot.

>> Sure.

>> As someone that worked on HAVA that tackled some of these challenges back 15 years ago, to ask you to reflect not just on some of your thoughts here, but sort of where we are, how far we've come, and what challenges remain ahead.

>> Okay. That's a big question.

>> It is. Take your time.

>> At the end of the day. First of all, I want to say this has been a great panel. It's very encouraging to see that we're focusing on Veterans voting.

Especially all the technology, the stuff that's out there, speaking of HAVA, you know, it's been 15 years, I think we've come a long way, and we've done a lot more to make things more accessible for people with disabilities and Veterans with disabilities. I mean, EAC by itself just being established is great.

But and then all the work with NIST and the technologies, understanding electronic voting. Because before HAVA, all we had was the 1984 law, which said move it or lose it to polling places, and we had the ADA that had the polling checklist, and that was about it. And we had motor voter that said get registered at the DMV.

So HAVA is a big law that has a lot of disability in it that did a lot of good work. And so the future is up, looking up for that.

But as I'm wrapping up this thing about Veterans, it's so important that Veterans vote. Because, you know, you've got to realize they are the ones who volunteered to be in the service, because of love of country, and get sent abroad to spread freedom and democracy and our values at home, and protect at home and abroad, and in worst case scenarios come back in a catastrophic disabled situation.

So, you know, all the states and local jurisdictions are working with electronic stuff to ensure that the opportunities for Veterans are out there to vote, which is

fantastic. What we really need is more veterans as candidates.

>> That's a really good point.

>> So thank you.

>> Thank you, Lee for being here. Thank you for your years of work on these issues. I know you were one of the original members of the TGDC and the work that the EAC has done to develop standards, so I appreciate your commitment and continued and ongoing efforts.

Just a few takeaways to share before we wrap up. To me, part of what I heard today is it's a mixture of programs and outreach, identifying those channels, and then technology. So there's a broad range of technologies, everything from online voter registration to early voting and the technology involved there to online ballot marking and dissemination, to voter lookup tools and voter information, to checklists, and ensuring the accessibility of the polling places using technology.

But it's also the people involved, and with elections it's always about the people. We talk so much about the technology, but in the end it's a people-driven process. So tailoring information, education, training, towards these voters, recruiting Veterans with disabilities, again, there may be a hidden pool of poll workers out there of our vets that are able to serve and just don't know that those opportunities exist. They've certainly shown this commitment, as you said, to service in that way.

Simplifying the process, using plain language, using best practices around ballot design, information design and tailoring, is critical to all of this. And then engaging these organizations, whether it be Wounded Warriors, Veterans organizations, of simply just the active groups within your state or locality, to find out the needs of these folks.

This is why the election process is a state and locally run process, so we can tailor these programs to those communities in this way. And then taking advantage of the opportunity to engage these folks and brag about the service they provided

and the service you're now providing them.

Michael, I'll say I love this concept, and commitment that you all have in Iowa, to having their back. Or to not leaving a man behind in this process. That speaks to all Americans, I think, and is a powerful tool, as you look at providing these services and engaging these folks, and talking to them about the voting process.

And then this need for continuous feedback, that need for continuous improvement, it's something election officials do inherently. After every election we ask ourselves how can we get better what can we do better, and so finding the right avenues for that feedback.

And then perhaps the biggest challenge is reviewing the laws. Looking at what laws are restricting the ability to provide better services. Maybe simple changes, in my experience in Ohio there's no such thing as a simple legal change, but how can we tackle that and partner with those groups to get those legal challenges -- or laws changed to serve Veterans with disabilities.

So I want to thank all of you. I've found this to be an incredibly engaging conversation, really valuable. I can tell you that moving forward this is something the EAC is going to continue to tackle, build off of the work that ITIF and the grant work that we did already on that. Again, check out EAC.gov for that work, some of the research, best practices, and poll worker training information that's available there.

Also, at EAC.gov we have a bunch of information on serving voters with disabilities, just in general. Checklists, best practices, techniques like Michael and Terry do in Virginia to serve these voters. And then also ballot design in plain language, we have a lot of information on that. And that could be the hidden gem sitting out there for a lot of folks. It's something that's come since HAVA, really been a conversation since HAVA, and election officials have really engaged to improve not just the ballot design, but design of any information that they have.

And then all of our commitments to improve the process. All of us are committed

to serving those who have served us, to having their backs, to not leaving them behind. So building on that commitment. So that's going to be part of the EAC's ongoing effort to fulfill the mission of HAVA. Which is to ensure that all voters can vote freely and independently.

So with that I want to thank you all again. Thank you for your time, and we'll wrap this up. Thank you, all.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

(Presentation concluded)