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General Comment

NIST Accessible Voting Comments

These answers come from the perspective of an individual with a high level spinal cord injury causing paralysis below the neck.

1. Describe concerns regarding accessing the right to vote privately and independently for people with disabilities.

Requiring the need for physical assistance with activities that require manual dexterity such as signing and filling out paper forms, pressing buttons, or pulling a letter, cannot be done independently or privately. Such tasks require the assistance of another human being or assistive technology device. Current ballot marking devices that are used are not always efficient, operable or properly set up in order to operate effectively once given control over to the voter.

2. Describe effective strategies, techniques, and technologies for addressing the barriers faced by voters with disabilities throughout the voting process.

Allowing for voters who use assistive technology such as voice to text or other writing software on their personal computers to mark a voter district specific fillable PDF is helpful. There is currently no way to then independently/privately deliver said PDF if physical handling is required to fold or physically handle the paper that is printed and mailed to the board of elections.

3. Describe barriers that people with disabilities encounter in getting useful information about the voting process.

I currently use the Internet and have not found significant barriers to information. However, it is up to me to find it.

4. Describe barriers that people with disabilities encounter with ballots, and in getting useful information

about the items on the ballot.

Handling of the ballot is not possible physically/independently.

5. Provide recommendations for improving voter access for people with disabilities.

Greater investments into private and secure electronic casting of votes. Elimination of restrictions on ballot formats that serve as a barrier to a more diverse selection of technological options being made available to states when evaluating and approving ballot marking devices.

6. Identify what has had the most impact enabling people with disabilities to vote privately and independently.

Local boards of elections providing fillable PDF's to be mailed to voters electronically and then mailed back to the board of election after printing has increased privacy and independence but is not complete.

7. Identify gaps that remain in making voting accessible to people with disabilities.

Currently, the casting of a ballot does not simultaneously produce an electronic means of casting a ballot and reproduce a secure paper backup that is auditable.

8. Describe barriers that people with disabilities encounter with completing online forms for the voting process.

Some websites can have compatibility issues with different assistive technology software.

12. Describe the availability of accessible voting equipment.

Current ballot marking devices are difficult for some individuals to set up for voters and require too many individual parts that can be lost or improperly used. (ImageCast)

13. Describe barriers that people with disabilities encounter with voting by mail.

Difficulty with manual tasks such as filling out a paper ballot for printing one that is filled out electronically reads a potential voter possibly unable to vote. It certainly casts a disincentive amongst individuals who may already face barriers.

15. Describe barriers that people with disabilities face at polling locations.

Using a power wheelchair, some curb cuts can serve as a barrier depending on how even they are with the surface they are adjacent to. Space inside the polling site can be restrictive if not large enough to accommodate multiple wheelchairs at one time.

16. Describe the accessibility of polling places.

That depends entirely on the polling place. Polling places should be available along accessible public transportation routes. Accessible parking can be unmarked or nonexistent. Pathways to and from the entrance can have barriers, broken concrete, branches, etc. Doorways to answer the calls that can be locked, and often are. Not everyone can knock or press a call bell.

17. Identify areas where poll worker training can address barriers experienced by people with disabilities.

Require individuals with various disabilities to be integrated into trainings so poll workers know what to anticipate socially, physically, and behaviorally.

19. Describe any barriers that people with disabilities face to voting that disproportionately impact communities of color, persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Accessible transportation is not necessarily available in rural areas and therefore may require greater numbers of polling sites per square mile.