

Barriers at the Polls Continue to Discourage Disabled Americans from Voting in November's Presidential Election

Despite long-standing federal protections, disabled voters continue to struggle to take part in the election process.

CLEARWATER, FL, UNITED STATES, October 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As election day quickly approaches, volunteers across the country continue to prepare for a significant influx of Americans who will be flooding the polling stations to cast their votes for president. While every American of legal age has the right to vote, disabled Americans continue to face significant obstacles at the polls.

The United States Election Assistance Commission reported that 17.7 million citizens, or just over 40% of Americans with disabilities, voted in the 2020 presidential election, marking a 5.9-point increase in turnout compared to 2016. Of those registered, 11% of voters with disabilities reported having some type of difficulty, representing nearly 1.95 million voters nationwide. This number increased in the 2022 midterm elections to 14% or 2.2 million disabled voters, with most problems reportedly occurring during in-person voting.(1)(2)

Disabled voters face more significant barriers at the polls compared to voters without disabilities. Several federal laws have been passed to reduce these barriers.(3) The Americans with Disabilities Act, for example, ensures that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 requires election officials to allow a voter with a disability to receive assistance from a person of the voter's choice (other than the voter's employer or its agent or an officer or agent of the voter's union).

Despite federal protections, polling places still struggle to provide accessible voting facilities. Additionally, volunteers often lack the proper training to ensure that disabled voters are treated equitably. Common misconceptions also persist regarding disabled voter's desire and ability to participate in the voting process.

"People might see someone with a disability and assume that they aren't competent enough or don't have the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves," says Dr. Craig Escudé,





People are people first. We all have the right to vote, and that should never be denied to anyone based on their disability.”

*Dr. Craig Escudé, President of
IntellectAbility*

President of IntellectAbility. “People are people first. We all have the right to vote, and that should never be denied to anyone based on their disability.”

IntellectAbility recently published a new resource titled [Making Voting More Inclusive for People with IDD](#) to improve education and increase awareness of the rights and accommodations available to voters with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Across the country, grassroots events are being held to empower people with disabilities to get out and vote. BJ Stasio, a disability rights activist who works to educate and empower disabled voters to get involved in the democratic process, recently [participated in a mock debate](#) to familiarize disabled New York residents with the voting process and help them think about the issues that matter to them.

“I feel like voting was my first actual real moment of advocacy because it was a choice that belonged to me,” said Stasio, “It’s a true fact that your vote does matter. Because if you vote, every elected official that wins, whether you voted for them or not, works for you as a constituent. The minute they get in office, it is your job as a constituent to inform them what it's like for you to live with a disability because they probably don't know.”

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks, thereby improving health and wellness. One such tool is the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST), of which they are the sole developer, producer, and distributor. The web-based HRST is the most widely used and validated health risk screening instrument for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. IntellectAbility also provides numerous health-related and person-centered service training for supporters of people with IDD. With an unrelenting focus, IntellectAbility works to fulfill its mission of improving health and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other at-risk populations. For more information, visit www.ReplacingRisk.com

Sources:

1. https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document_library/files/Fact_sheet_on_disability_and_voter_turnout_in_2020_0.pdf
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