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Subject: Election Accessibility (September 2009)

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HAVAccess

The election reform resource to help you address polling place access



Inclusion Solutions
2009 Catalog: Over 300
Products for Election
Access

HAVAccess is [Inclusion Solutions'](#) free newsletter to help election officials in the United States ensure access for voters with disabilities under the Help America Vote Act and/or other laws. Please call us at 1-866-232-5487. Be sure to whitelist this email address or add it to your contact list -- Don't miss an issue.

Funding Remains Available -- but Time May be Short

Grants remain open for polling place accessibility. Not only was funding made available [at the federal level](#) and to [Protection and Advocacy agencies](#), but many states now have made provisions for local officials to access these funds. Remember that certain funds expire 5 years after their availability (thus in some states funds may expire on September 30, 2009). If your state is one of those with expiring 2004 funds, please give us a call at 1-866-232-5487.

State Grant Programs and How to Access Them (updated):

Accessibility funds administered by HHS (such as those mentioned above) are distributed by states to local officials to improve accessibility in many states. Active state grant programs include:

- Alabama: [2009 Grant Materials -- \\$555,000 available](#);
- Minnesota (\$364,900 available -- **closes November 2**) [Proposal to Include With Minnesota Applications \(IS\)](#)
- Missouri (**closes December 31**)
- Texas (**funding must be spent by December 31**): [HAVA Memo \(unofficial\)](#); [Proposal to include with Texas Applications \(IS\)](#)
- South Carolina (Open Indefinitely): [Reprint of State HAVA Grant Letter \(unofficial\)](#); [SC Proposal \(IS\)](#)
- Colorado: [HAVA and Voters With Disabilities FAQ](#)
- Florida: [Florida Proposal \(IS\)](#)
- Illinois (\$1,077,276 available -- **closes in 2010**)

Be sure to check out [Wisconsin's Innovative "Type A" and "Type B" grant program](#). And New York has announced that counties can purchase whatever accessible voting booths they want with access funding. [NY OGS letter](#)

State Grant Programs that are closed (but which may reopen later) include: [Vermont](#); [Washington \(Closed May 29\)](#); [Michigan](#); [California: Vote Grant Program RFA Summer 2009](#).

Other states with active grant programs where election administrators may have access to funding to make polling places accessible include Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Jersey, New York, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and many more. Be sure to check with your own state for official information. (*State Officials -- If we've missed information on your program please let us know!*)

Other Articles on Access:

California: [Polling Place Access Surveys Underway in San Mateo County](#)
 Georgia: [Polling Place Compliance for November 2009 Elections](#)
 Minnesota: [Grants available to improve polling access](#)
 New York: [Outreach Program to Target Voters With Disabilities](#)
 Japan: [Polling booths hard to access for some](#)
 Northern Ireland: [Voting for People With Disabilities in N. Ireland](#)

Also see the [Inclusion Solutions 2009 Catalog](#)

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From My Perspective...

This "From My Perspective" includes 2 separate, shorter items worth reviewing. In Part I, The National Center For Independent Living (NCIL) Voting Rights Working Group is writing a series of articles on the experiences of e NCIL members as they attempted to vote during last November's election. Part II is a reprint of the excellent "Ask Access Abby -- this is the first story.

Part I: A Reflection on the Previous Election: Voting machines have been implemented in polling places to maximize accessibility for persons with disabilities and anyone else experiencing difficulties in voting. However, while trying to utilize the newly purchased machines during this past historical election, many problems arose including:

- The screen was visible to other people waiting to vote, therefore privacy was not possible.
- The machine was situated in a space which did not allow a person in a wheelchair to comfortably move around it. After it became obvious the space was too small, the machine was moved.
- Poll workers were "deciding" who should use the machine based upon a visual assessment. It did not seem that there were standard protocols for use or for letting all voters know the machine was available for anyone -- people with disabilities were targeted.
- The headphones were inadequate for filtering out background noise.
- Several people complained that they could not hear the instructions.
- One person stated that the computer "froze" three times during her voting process. Eventually a technician from the county office was brought in to fix the problem. But, it took her a long time to actually vote.
- Poll workers were not prepared to assist people with disabilities who used the machine.

NCIL is soliciting input from others as to their voting experiences as well and invites others to submit their stories to Jason@ncil.org

Part II: Ask Access Abbie (Accessible Voting Booths) This is a reprint of an article from the Catskill Center for Independence's HAVA Quarterly (<http://www.ccfi.us/havamain.html>). It discusses the critical issue of accessible voting booths and applies not only to New York but nationwide.

Question: Now that we are moving towards an all paper ballot system we are looking at privacy booths for people to use when they mark their ballots. We realize some voters who use wheel chairs will be using a pen and not the BMD to mark their ballot. Are there specific measurements for these items and how many booths should we have?

Answer: Regardless if you are using an existing table with a table-top privacy screen or stand alone units you need to keep in mind table/surface height, width and knee clearance to ensure adequate space for a wheelchair user's accommodation. Along with