

REPORT TO THE VIRGINIA DISABILITY COMMISSION EFFORTS TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF ELECTIONS

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Scope of the Problem

- 18% of Virginians are affected by some form of disability (2000 Census)
- Low 10.4% in Loudoun County; High 35.9% in Buchanan County
- County average is 21.5%
- Disabilities community 12% less likely to vote in the 2000 national elections than the general population (AAPD)
- If turnout was equal in 2000, then 43,996 more Virginians (1.7% of total VA voter turnout) would have voted

SBE Action Areas

1. Make polling places more physically accessible
 - Survey all 2,294 polling places by September 1, 2005
 - 1,311 polling place surveys completed (57.2%).
 - 1,770 individual accessibility barriers identified.
 - Make 95% of polling places physically accessible by January 1, 2006
 - 367 polling places (16%) meet physical accessibility standards
 - 71 barriers corrected since 10/1/2004
 - Issue reports to localities in early 2005 listing accessibility barriers along with guidance on eliminating them
2. Provide accessible voting machines
 - Put at least one accessible voting machine in every precinct by January 1, 2006
 - 852 voting precincts (37%) will have accessible machines for the 2004 General Election
3. Standardize and improve training for local election officials
 - Institute web/video based distance learning curriculum about promoting access to elections by persons with disabilities
4. Integrate voters with disabilities into voter education efforts
 - Alternatively format voter education materials
 - Large print versions of Voter Rights & Responsibilities Cards and Easy Voter Guides produced and distributed statewide
 - Voter Rights & Responsibilities and Easy Voter Guides read on statewide network of Radio Reading Services for the Blind

- Easy Voter Guides (including Rights & Responsibilities Card) available on SBE website
- Producing audio formatted Easy Voter Guides (including Rights & Responsibilities Card) for wider distribution
- Inform voters of physical accessibility barriers at polling places
 - Linking the results of accessibility surveys to polling place look-up feature on the SBE website

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