



1-844-DIS-VOTE
www.disabilityvote.org

Statements from Indefinitely Confined Voters

Wisconsin's Indefinitely Confined provision allows voters to self-certify that they are *"indefinitely confined because of age, illness, infirmity, or disability and request absentee ballots be sent to me automatically until I am no longer confined or I fail to return a ballot."*

These are some examples of disabled Wisconsin voters who rely on the Indefinitely Confined provision to exercise their right to vote.

63-year-old Voter with Cerebral Palsy

I'm a 63-year-old woman with Cerebral Palsy. Since 1989, I have lived in my own wheelchair accessible apartment with the help of come in home health aides. I use an electric wheelchair, and I'm unable to get into a car. I need a wheelchair equipped vehicle, and use the County Paratransit van to get around. It's my only means of transportation. I am grateful to have it, but you have to schedule a ride two days in advance, and you have to allow a lot of waiting time on both ends because it is a shared ride service. It would be very difficult to vote using the Paratransit van, because I wouldn't know two days in advance when to tell them to come back, and would probably also have to ride around for awhile on the way to vote. The process would involve a lot of time, trouble and planning, and waiting in a location I wasn't familiar with.

Even though I believe that my vote is very important, I doubt that I would do it much, even before Covid, because of the logistical and safety issues. I think it was my social worker they told me how to get an absentee ballot back in 1989 when I first moved out on my own. I was told at that time that as long as I always returned my ballot, I would continue to get them and I have voted in every election since then. I rely on continuing to get my absentee ballot. My physical condition isn't going to get better, and in fact I get less mobile as I get older, so having to reapply every time wouldn't make sense, and would probably make me miss elections. I really hope they leave things the way they are.

58-year-old voter with autoimmune disease

I became suddenly disabled in 2014 after developing post viral autoimmune diseases. One of these, dysautonomia, causes extreme fluctuations in blood pressure and heart rate, among other symptoms. As there is no generally accepted cause of and no cure for dysautonomia, my condition is chronic. Like others with autoimmune disease I am immunocompromised. Because of this I have been housebound since 2014, only leaving the house for medical and physical therapy appointments. Among the reasons for this is that I am physically unable to stand for greater than a few minutes at a time without symptoms, including the extreme blood pressure issues mentioned earlier.

I have voted in every election since I turned 18 years old and feel very strongly that it is every citizen's right and responsibility to do so. The emphasis is on responsibility as well as a right. On the advice of my physician, a year after I became ill, I applied for indefinite confinement so that I could continue to vote, and I have done so in every election since. Those of us who are disabled are marginalized in virtually every aspect of voting. For people with significant health issues or due to age, providing a photo ID, just physically getting to the Division of Motor Vehicles to obtain one, can be impossible and therefore jeopardizes their ability to participate in our democracy. Requiring people with disabilities and the aged to upload a photo ID to a website can also be an insurmountable challenge. Not only because of the cost of the computer, scanner and internet connection but also because they may not physically be capable of getting to a location to complete the process if they lack these necessary items.

60-year-old Voter with MS

I am a 60-year-old person who has been living with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis, a progressive, central nervous system disease, since 2004. My physical balance and walking has declined to the point that I have needed to use assistive devices, including wheelchairs sometimes, for the past few years. Although I am able to live independently, I have to use adaptive modifications and hired assistance to be able to have many household needs and activities taken care of.

I became indefinitely confined in the spring of 2020, realizing that my health condition places me in the high-risk group for covid-19. Being able to vote from home not only removed the burden of wondering about, and trying to figure out how I would navigate the mobility issues and possible barriers involved with delivering my ballot to the ballot box, it also removed the risk that I would have endured by potentially exposing myself to covid-19. To be able to vote this way is priceless—without this means, many of us would not be able to have our voices--through our votes-- count.

39-year-old on Dialysis

D. has been voting as an IC absentee voter since 2016. When D. went online to get her absentee ballot in 2016, she was in the hospital. She knew that she would need to always ask for one. She saw online that Indefinitely Confined was an option (which she didn't know about prior to this) and realized this was an appropriate option for her. D. is a patient on dialysis. Because of her struggles with dialysis, she's begun having lots of other health issues, including skin lesions, mobility difficulties, and stroke. D. uses a walker most of the time. She estimates that she is ambulatory with her walker about 80% of the time. D. says that even leaving the house is difficult to do. In public places, people will unintentionally bump or crowd her. This makes her very nervous and anxious about even going places.

28-year-old with multiple disabilities

J. lives with his parents and family. His parents serve as his guardian. J. needs support with reading and completing his ballot. With all the commotion at the polling place, this is more easily done at home for him. Although polling places are required to be ADA compliant, physical accessibility can be difficult for J. as well, so voting at home alleviates these problems. When J. went to court for his guardianship hearing, it was very important to him and to his family that he retain his right to vote. The GAL was initially not very supportive of this, but his parents worked with the GAL to help her understand that J. understood and could participate in the voting process. When J. turned 18, he went with his parents to the Clerk's office to register. Upon registering, they requested Indefinitely Confined voter status right away. J. has always been an indefinitely confined voter.

Voter with MS, in her 60's

K is a mother, wife, and taxpayer. She loved her job but had to stop working over 20 years ago as she was increasingly disabled by MS. She lives at home but is at a nursing home level of care and enrolled in Wisconsin's IRIS program which provides long term care supports in the community. She spends her days in bed and needs assistance with all activities of daily living. Leaving her home to go to an essential medical appointment requires extensive planning and coordination, because of her level of disability, and frailty, and accessibility needs. Leaving her home to visit with family and friends is for the most part an unattainable dream. She has voted as an indefinitely confined voter for ten years and takes pride in being a good citizen and regular voter. Because of her disability, her physical ability to write is very limited. She is not able to complete forms by herself either by hand or on the computer. The proposed requirements for her as an indefinitely confined voters to go somewhere to take an oath, and to see her doctor to have him verify her status would be major barriers. Having to resubmit the request every two years and repeatedly provide a copy of photo ID would also be very difficult.