



1-844-DIS-VOTE
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Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition Budget & Policy Recommendations 1/2023

Support Safe, Secure, and Accessible Voting for All

Casting a ballot is one of the most fundamental rights of our democracy. However, many people with disabilities experience barriers that make it difficult or impossible for them to vote, such as inaccessible polling places, limited access to transportation, and lack of acceptable photo ID for voting as many are non-drivers. New restrictions resulting from litigation and rules changes have created additional barriers for some voters and created confusion about voting rights and accommodations.

According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately 26% of American adult have (1 in 4) have some type of disabling conditions and may experience disability related barriers to registering to vote and casting a ballot. The Disability Vote Coalition wants to work with policymakers to ensure people with disabilities can fully participate in the electoral process by addressing accessibility concerns and other barriers.

BUDGET REQUESTS

- 1. Allocate additional funding for specialized transportation programs** (Wis. Stat. §85.21 and §85.215) **to fund transportation for voting related activities** including transportation to the DMV, municipal clerks, early voting locations, and to polling sites on election day.
- 2. Allocate additional funding to the Wisconsin Elections Commission for expansion of the Polling Place Accessibility Audits program to fund additional audits conducted on Election days and the Accessibility Supply Program** which provides cost effective and simple solutions to address accessibility issues at polling places. Under federal and state law, all polling places must be fully accessible to older adults and voters with disabilities.

3. Increase DMV Access to meet the needs of non-drivers including people with disabilities and older adults who need photo ID for voting.

- **Expand services hours at existing DMV locations** to include expanded weekday hours and Saturday hours in the four weeks preceding a statewide election Wednesdays, or Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- **Co-locate DMV state ID operations or mobile DMV sites at locations that are already accessed by people with disabilities and older adults** such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers, income maintenance offices, and human service departments.

LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS

1. Enhance Training for Election Inspectors (Poll Workers) and Special Voting Deputies (SVDs). There is wide variation in the content and amount of training election inspectors and SVDs (who conduct absentee voting in person at residential care facilities and qualified retirement homes) receive. Wis. Stat. § 7.315(1)(b) requires all election inspectors and SVDs receive training at least once every two years. To ensure election inspectors have current information on voting regulations and voter rights, **change the state statute to require new election inspectors and SVDs to complete training on core competencies (including disability related content) before serving and a minimum of one training program annually, thereafter.** Topics should include accessibility, voting rights and accommodations, and disability awareness and etiquette.

2. Improve access to obtaining a photo ID for voting:

- **Expand Acceptable Photo ID Options for voting to be inclusive of non-drivers.** Access to photo ID can be a barrier for many citizens with disabilities because so many are non-drivers and do not have a driver's license, the most common form of photo ID. Getting to the DMV to obtain a state ID for voting may also be challenging due to lack of accessible transportation, limited DMV hours and locations, as well as not having the required documents such as birth certificate. Wisconsin should expand acceptable photo ID options for voting purposes to be inclusive of non-drivers.

Some options to consider are: any photo ID card issued by the federal government, the state of Wisconsin, or a Wisconsin county, local government, or other governmental entity; regular college and university ID cards from all WI colleges and technical schools; high school student photo ID cards; and an affidavit for voters who have reasonable impediments to obtaining a photo ID. A number of states offer the affidavit options, according to the [National Council of State Legislators](#).

- **Expand online services at the DMV by making the forms (MV3004 and MV3012) used to apply for a Wisconsin ID or paper receipt for voting (when the voter does not have certain documentation) available online.**

3. Improve access to secure, equitable and private absentee voting:

- **Provide equitable access to absentee voting by creating a screen reader accessible,** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant absentee ballot. This will allow voters with blindness, vision loss, or other disabilities that restrict them from physically marking an absentee ballot to use assistive technology to vote privately and independently. The ballot is electronically sent to the voter, who can then complete the ballot using appropriate assistive technology, then electronically and securely submit the ballot to the municipal clerk. Wisconsin should join other states in providing equitable access to absentee voting for voters with print disabilities.
- **Change Wis. Stat. § 6.87(4)(b)1 to include ADA accessible and secure drop boxes as an allowable method for casting an absentee ballot.** Drop boxes have long been available in some Wisconsin communities and around the country. A recent review, conducted by the Associated Press, of the use of the boxes across the country determined that no state reported “any instances in which the boxes were connected to voter fraud or stolen ballots,” nor were there incidents of vandalism that might have affected election results by destroying ballots.”

4. Improve access to voting for care facility residents by:

- Developing a protocol to ensure all eligible facilities offer SVD services;
- Changing Wisconsin law (§ 6.875(2)(a)) to allow all SVDs, as an extension of the municipal clerk’s office, to assist residents with voter registration, as needed, and voting absentee in person;
- Modifying the timeline for conducting SVD visits ((§ 6.875(6)(a)) to expand the amount of time SVD visits overlap with open registration timelines and to allow adequate time for care facility residents who were unable to vote during the SVD visits to receive, complete and return their absentee ballots by mail; and
- Ensuring the process for allowing relatives of residents to be notified of and/or observe the voting process (Wis. Stat. § 6.875(6)(c)2) complies with federal Residents’ Rights Requirements related to Nursing Home Residents’ Right to Vote and other federal laws regarding voting rights.

Residents of nursing homes and other congregate setting have the same right to vote as any other citizen unless they have lost that right due to a judge’s order. Voting is a resident rights issue. [CMS states](#) that nursing homes should have a plan to ensure residents can exercise their right to vote, whether in-person, by mail, absentee, or other authorized process. Wisconsin must ensure that that secure and accessible voting is available for all eligible voters.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Federal and State Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities

- *The Americans with Disabilities Act and Other Federal Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities*, U.S. Department of Justice:
www.justice.gov/file/69411/download
- *List of Wisconsin Accessibility Provisions*, Disability Vote Coalition:
disabilityvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/State-Statutes-Related-to-Accessibility-acc.pdf

Accessible Polling Places

- **Election Day Accessibility Checklist for use by poll workers**, Disability Rights Wisconsin: elections.wi.gov/resources/quick-reference-topics/election-day-accessibility-checklist
- **What to Expect During a Polling Place Accessibility Audit**, Wisconsin Elections Commission: elections.wi.gov/what-expect-during-polling-place-accessibility-audit

DRW Competency, Guardianship and Voting in Wisconsin Brochure.

- **Accessible English brochure:** disabilityvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guardianship-and-voting-English-ACC.pdf
- **Accessible Spanish brochure:** disabilityvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guardianship-and-voting-Spanish-ACC.pdf

About the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition

The WDVC is a non-partisan effort to help ensure full participation in the entire electoral process of voters with disabilities, including registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places. Members include people with disabilities, and over 40 community agencies across the state. The Coalition is coordinated by Disability Rights Wisconsin and Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.