



DISABILITY RIGHTS

NEW YORK

New York's Protection & Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program

13 Things Voters with Disabilities Need to Know

- 1) **Your vote matters.** Elections are often determined by voter turnout, and a handful of votes can change the outcome of an election. There are over 34 million eligible voters with disabilities, making the disability community a substantial voting bloc with the capacity to impact elections and policy.
- 2) **You have the right to vote independently and privately.** You have the right to make independent choices about voting and to cast a ballot without any interference. You have the right to do so privately and to keep your vote secret.
- 3) **You have the right to get help with voting from a person of your choosing.** Help can be provided by a friend, family member, caregiver, a service provider, or a poll worker. The only persons who cannot help you mark or cast your ballot are representatives of your employer or union.
- 4) **Only a judge can make the decision that someone is not competent to vote.** Election officials and poll workers cannot stop you from voting because of your disability. Staff in hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions cannot refuse to allow residents to register and vote or to obtain absentee ballots.
- 5) **You have the right to vote by absentee ballot.** An absentee ballot enables you to mail in your vote, or deliver your ballot early, instead of appearing at a polling site on Election Day. You can call 1-800-FOR-VOTE (1-800-367-8683) to request an absentee ballot application or download one at www.elections.ny.gov.
- 6) **You have the right to an accessible polling place.** The Americans with Disabilities Act requires all polling sites to meet accessibility standards. Those standards ensure equal access for people with disabilities, including voters who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices or who are blind or have vision loss.

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- 7) **You have the right to use a Ballot Marking Device (BMD).** The Help America Vote Act requires all polling sites to have working BMDs. A BMD is an accessible voting machine that allows individuals with low vision, limited dexterity, physical impairments, or other disabilities to mark their ballot privately and independently. You do not need to have a disability to use a BMD. Using a BMD can also be helpful because it provides audio instructions for the voting process.
- 8) **It's easy to register!** You can call 1-800-FOR-VOTE (1-800-367-8683) to request a registration form and to inquire about registration deadlines. You can also visit www.elections.ny.gov to download a voter registration form and access other voting information. To check your registration status visit voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us.
- 9) **You must show up at the right polling place.** You can identify your polling site by calling 1-800-FOR-VOTE (1-800-367-8683) or visiting voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us.
- 10) **You don't need a government-issued ID to vote.** Most voters are not required to present identification when voting in New York. If you are voting for the first time in New York and did not provide any identification information when you registered, you may be asked to provide some verification of your identity, such as a photo ID, a utility bill, a bank statement, a paycheck, or other government document that shows your name and address.
- 11) **You have the right to a provisional ballot.** If you are asked for identification and cannot provide it, or if there are any other problems with your registration, you can ask the poll worker for a provisional ballot. A provisional ballot allows you to cast your vote pending verification of your eligibility.
- 12) **You have the right to make informed voting decisions.** It's important to learn about the issues and candidates before voting. You can visit the following sites to learn about ballot measures and candidates, and to find out about upcoming debates or forums:
 - VoteSmart.org
 - Vote411.org
- 13) **You have the right to file complaints about accessibility violations or other voting-related problems.** If you believe that your right to equal access to voting has been violated, you can file a complaint with the New York State Board of Elections. **If you experience any issues related to being a voter with a disability, please contact Disability Rights New York at Voting@DRNY.org or 518.432.7861.**