

Over the last four decades, laws and regulations have been passed to remove barriers that make registering and voting difficult or impossible for persons with disabilities. Starting with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, subsequent laws have included the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1985, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) mandated additional requirements, including providing accessibility for the blind and visually impaired and ensuring that they have the opportunity to vote privately and independently—basic rights enjoyed by other citizens. HAVA also provided financial assistance to States to purchase voting systems that are accessible to disabled voters.

The survey asked how many polling places provided access to voters with disabilities and how many precincts allowed a voter with disabilities to cast a private ballot.

Information about access for people with disabilities is available for nearly 80 percent of jurisdictions—a major improvement in the amount of data collected in the 2004 study, in which more than half the States did not respond. This high response rate compares very favorably to the information provided more generally by the States about polling places. Much progress has been made in only two years.

According to the States reporting, 87.7 percent of the polling places allowed access for voters with disabilities and 84.5 percent allowed these voters to cast a private ballot. Detailed data on accessible polling places by State is located in table 32 in appendix B.

The Help America Vote Act (2002): Providing Assistance to Citizens Who Are Disabled

- Requires accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired
- Requires jurisdictions to provide at least one voting system equipped for individuals with disabilities at each polling place
- Provides funding to make polling places accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing the opportunity to vote privately and independently

Figure 6. Disabled Accessibility of Polling Places

