

ADOPTED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HCR 14 DISABILITY VOTING TASK FORCE

ADOPTED: February 10, 2023

The following recommendations were made by the HCR 14 Disability Voting Task Force which was created to study the voting rights of persons with disabilities and the procedures available to assist those persons to cast their ballots and to report to the legislature. In Louisiana, people with disabilities make up 33% of our entire population¹. These recommendations were made at the meeting held on February 10, 2023:

ADOPTED WITH UNANIMOUS SUPPORT:

- Legislation that would authorize and fund an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Officer within the Secretary of State's Office, Elections Division. (Proposed by the Secretary of State)
- Designate, within the Department of State, a primary point of contact for Election Day accessibility issues and an accessible means of communication for disabled individuals. (Proposed by the Secretary of State as administrative policy)
- Require the ADA Compliance Officer to conduct and issue a biannual accessibility audit, with the final report being issued to the Secretary of State and Commissioner of Elections. (Proposed by the Secretary of State as administrative policy)
- Create a permanent Disability Voting Advisory Group within the Department of State which will:
 - Consult on improving election commissioner training, specifically related to ADA compliance and assisting voters with disabilities.
 - Consult on recommendations to improve accessibility in the next voting system.
 - Consult on creating a publication of best practices related to accessible voting for local election officials.
 - Consult on revising and improving the agency's current publications and postings at voting locations.
 - Consult on better accessibility of information on the rights of voters with disabilities on the Secretary of State's website. (Proposed by the Secretary of State as administrative policy)
- Administrative policy within the Department of State to require election commissioners to receive Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) training as part of the current required commissioner training. (Proposed by Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council)
- Legislation that requests an allocation of funding for enforcement of voting accessibility and effective election administration for voters with disabilities. (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)
- An expansion of early voting locations, contingent on the appropriation of adequate funding and resources. (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)

¹ No citation provided

- Legislation to allow for virtual participation (i.e., Zoom) and accessibility for public meetings related to election administration, where possible. (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)

ADOPTED WITH OPPOSITION:

- Legislation to include an individual with disabilities on the State Board of Election Supervisors in order to represent and advise of issues-related to people with disabilities (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)

VOTED IN SUPPORT:

Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
 Julie Hagan, designee of the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health
 Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana
 Nicole Marquez, designee of Split Second Foundation
 Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
 Jamie Duplechine, designee of The Arc Louisiana
 Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

VOTED IN OPPOSITION (Opposed because the State Board of Election Supervisors is a quasi-governmental board tasked with administrative hearings and very limited aspects of election administration, rather than broad-based policy-making or advising. The Secretary of State's office recommended, and the task force unanimously recommended, an advisory board within the Department of State to facilitate participation and policy discussions on voting with disabilities.):

Nancy Landry, designee of the Secretary of State
 Bryce Bourg, designee of the Commissioner of Elections
 Jeff Skidmore, designee of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association
 Corey Passantino, designee of the Louisiana Registrar of Voters Association

- Legislation to remove the signature requirement and other paperwork for absentee-by-mail ballots submitted through the disability absentee-by-mail program. The signature requirement oftentimes causes barriers to people with disabilities that live alone or do not have anyone to provide the necessary signature. (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)

VOTED IN SUPPORT:

Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
 Julie Hagan, designee of the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health
 Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana
 Nicole Marquez, designee of Split Second Foundation
 Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
 Jamie Duplechine, designee of The Arc Louisiana
 Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

VOTED IN OPPOSITION (Opposed due to the increased risk of fraud and since it would remove safeguards to ensure voters with disabilities are protected in the voting process):

Nancy Landry, designee of the Secretary of State

Bryce Bourg, designee of the Commissioner of Elections

Jeff Skidmore, designee of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association

Corey Passantino, designee of the Louisiana Registrar of Voters Association

- Legislation to allow for the electronic return of ballots delivered to the voter individually which would allow for voters with disabilities to cast their ballot independently and privately. (Proposed by Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs)

VOTED IN SUPPORT:

Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana

Nicole Marquez, designee of Split Second Foundation

Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

Jamie Duplechine, designee of The Arc Louisiana

Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

VOTED IN OPPOSITION (Opposed due to the increased risk of fraud and cybersecurity concerns associated with wide-scale electronic delivery, as well as the removal of protective safeguards for voters with disabilities):

Nancy Landry, designee of the Secretary of State

Bryce Bourg, designee of the Commissioner of Elections

Jeff Skidmore, designee of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association

Corey Passantino, designee of the Louisiana Registrar of Voters Association

- Legislation to enact a pilot curbside voting program which would allow for voters with disabilities to cast their ballot independently. (Proposed by Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice)

VOTED IN SUPPORT:

Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana

Nicole Marquez, designee of Split Second Foundation

Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

Jamie Duplechine, designee of The Arc Louisiana

Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

VOTED IN OPPOSITION (Opposed due to the removal of oversight by election officials, safeguards in place on the return of absentee-by-mail ballots, and the undermining of election integrity):

Nancy Landry, designee of the Secretary of State

Bryce Bourg, designee of the Commissioner of Elections

Jeff Skidmore, designee of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association

Corey Passantino, designee of the Louisiana Registrar of Voters Association

- Legislation to eliminate registration requirements related to voting assistance for voters with disabilities, and to eliminate the requirement that voters with disabilities submit paperwork verifying their disability. The elimination of these requirements would eliminate burden imposed on people with disabilities that may not have access to transportation (Proposed by Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana)

VOTED IN SUPPORT:

Bambi Polotzola, designee of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Dr. Ashley Volion, designee of Disability Rights Louisiana

Nicole Marquez, designee of Split Second Foundation

Jill Hano, designee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

Jamie Duplechine, designee of The Arc Louisiana

Ashley Shelton, designee of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

VOTED IN OPPOSITION (Opposed due to the increased risk of fraud, and because the disability designation is a helpful tool in aiding election officials in identifying and assisting voters with disabilities):

Nancy Landry, designee of the Secretary of State

Bryce Bourg, designee of the Commissioner of Elections

Jeff Skidmore, designee of the Louisiana Clerks of Court Association

Corey Passantino, designee of the Louisiana Registrar of Voters Association