

Voting Assistance for the Disabled

This brochure answers some of the more common questions regarding the requirements for giving proper assistance to those who genuinely need such help on election day.

WHAT IS VOTER “ASSISTANCE”?

“Assistance” is the **actual casting of a vote** for a voter by a specified person in the **privacy** of the voting booth on election day. Those giving assistance must vote as directed by the voter.

WHO MAY BE GIVEN ASSISTANCE?

Only those voters who **genuinely** need assistance may be given assistance. Illinois law provides that the following persons may receive assistance:

- ! physically **disabled** or **blind** voters

- ! those voters who **cannot read or write** the English language.

Of course, all voters needing assistance **must be registered to vote**. Intoxicated voters do not qualify as being disabled and may **not** be given assistance.

WHO CAN ACTUALLY GIVE THE ASSISTANCE?

Any voter who needs assistance in voting by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write may be given assistance by a person of the voter’s choice. However, the person giving the assistance cannot be an officer or agent of the voter’s place of employment or union.

If the voter who needs assistance does not specify a particular person to assist him in voting, then the voter can be assisted by two election judges, one from each political party.

HOW IS THE ASSISTANCE GIVEN?

Assistance is always given in the privacy of the voting booth. Anyone giving assistance must cast the vote as directed by the voter and **must not** give anyone information as to how the vote was cast. The person giving assistance must not attempt to influence the voter in any way. **Anyone who knowingly threatens, forces, or pays a voter to vote a certain way is guilty of a Class 4 felony.**

IS A SEPARATE AFFIDAVIT REQUIRED?

Yes. Assistance can only be given upon **the voter’s request** and only after the voter completes the

appropriate affidavit. In every instance of assistance, **both** the voter receiving the assistance and the person(s) giving the assistance **must sign** the affidavit. If disabled, the voter must complete the affidavit stating the specific physical disability and whether the disability is temporary or permanent. Also, the voter's "Application for Ballot" must be marked by an Election Judge to show that the voter requested assistance.

WHAT IF A VOTER NEEDS INSTRUCTION?

"Instruction" is explaining to the voter how to use the voting equipment. "Assistance," however, is actually casting a vote for a voter as directed by the voter.

Any instruction that might be required should be given before the voter enters the booth. A specimen ballot, not the voter's official ballot, must be used during instruction. An affidavit is required for "assistance" but it is not required for "instruction".

WHAT ABOUT INACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES?

Any handicapped or elderly voter who cannot enter a polling place due to the structural features of the building, may request to vote outside (near the entrance) of his polling place. Such requests must be made with the election authority (County Clerk or Board of Election Commissioners) **by the close of business** on the day **before** the election. The election authority will then notify the appropriate election judges of the names of those persons making such a request.

If notification is received by the election judges, the voter completes the entire voting process (weather permitting) outside the polling place as follows: Two judges of opposite party affiliation deliver an application to the voter. The completed application is brought back into the polling place to the binder book judges. After the signature and address are checked and it is determined that the individual is qualified to vote, a ballot and a portable voting booth or enclosure is provided to allow the voter to mark his ballot in complete secrecy. In no case can a ballot be delivered to a voter beyond **50 feet** of the entrance to the building in which the polling place is located. After the voter completes voting, the two election judges take the ballot (keeping it inside its envelope) back into the polling place for deposit into the ballot box.

THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

A primary goal of the State Board of Elections is to help bring about greater understanding and participation in the electoral process. *Authorities on Illinois elections are available as speakers for civic organizations, school groups and the general public.*

For more information on election laws and procedures, write or call the State Board of Elections

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