



DISABILITY RIGHTS WASHINGTON

Formerly known as Washington Protection & Advocacy System

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Dear County Election Official:

October 7, 2010

The twenty day "early voting period" prior to November 2nd is almost upon us and we have attached a few suggestions that might increase the accessibility of your elections.

We developed these suggestions based on what we have observed in our election surveys. Disability Rights Washington staff are surveying the accessibility of the 2010 election. We plan to visit each of the state's 39 counties during the 20 day early voting periods in either the Primary or General election. During the Primary Election, we visited 21 counties. We plan to survey the remaining 18 counties during General Election early voting period.

During our visits, we talked with election staff, visited county websites, and checked the path from parking to election office for each county we surveyed. We identified many creative and effective practices currently being implemented by counties that improve accessibility and participation in elections by voters with disabilities, as well as some remaining barriers.

We will be issuing a complete report of our findings after the General Election in November. In the meantime, we have suggestions for addressing some barriers to access we observed in several counties during the primaries. These are suggestions that we think are easily implemented at low or no cost.

The attachment, titled "Easy to Fix, Common Barriers to Disability Access", identifies some common barriers that we observed that we think could be fixed with minimal trouble and expense. Also attached is a PowerPoint which illustrates some common barriers and solutions. We are hoping that counties will review this list and consider implementing the suggested changes prior to the General Election.

We extend our thanks to all of the county election staff who have taken time out of their busy schedules, often on short notice, to talk with us about what they are doing to make elections accessible to voters with disabilities. We look forward to scheduling visits to other counties in the days prior to the 2010 General Election.

Sincerely,

Betty Schwieterman

Andrea Kadlec

Andrea Kelso

David Lord