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Vice-Chair Masterson: Improve Experience for Voters With Disabilities

from: **Bryan Whitener** on May 03, 2016

Posted By Vice-Chair Masterson on May 3, 2016

Last week the EAC held a **public hearing** to **continue exploring** ways to improve the voting experience for voters with disabilities. It was a fantastic opportunity for the Commission to hear from voters with disabilities about successes they've experienced since HAVA and the challenges they continue to face. We also heard from election officials who are tackling those challenges head on and working to improve access. I encourage everyone to go **watch the hearing** and read the **written testimony** we received. Simply listening, reading and learning from these experiences will help improve the voting experience for all voters. Here are my takeaways from the hearing:

1. Checklists are important, clear communication directly with voters with disabilities is more important.
2. Building accessibility in to your services from the beginning ensures proper access. Adding accessibility after the fact increases cost and is usually not done well.
3. Well implemented accessibility functions and features improve the voter experience for all voters, not just voters with disabilities.
4. Serving voters with disabilities better is not a matter of more training. Better training focused on understanding the needs of voters with disabilities in your community, including involving the voters in the training, process is what is needed.
5. We've made progress since HAVA. Access has improved. We still have work to do to fulfill full promise of HAVA.
6. Universal design principles must be a part of next iteration of voting system standards.

EAC has a **resources available** focused on improving access on our **#BeReady16** page. Also, if you are passionate about these issues and want to get involved in writing the next set of voting system standards, join the EAC/NIST **accessibility constituency group** focused on ensuring that access is included throughout the standards.

I want to thank all the participants for sharing their candid and honest testimony. Moving forward we will continue to add to these resources and will continue to challenge ourselves to listen and learn from voters with disabilities to improve the voting experience for all voters.

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