



To: Election Verification Network Attendees

From: Gretchen Knauff, Every1Counts Project, Connecticut Office of Protection and
Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

Date: March 17, 2017

Re: Polling Place Mistakes

Thank you to all of the participants who took the time yesterday to participate in the mock polling place at the EVN Conference. I hope you enjoyed and learned from the exercise. If you did not have chance to come through the polling place, the following will give you an idea about the objective of the exercise and a few of the many potential barriers that hinder participation of voters with disabilities.

The polling place was developed based on a hands on activity for Connecticut Registrars of Voters to help them identify barriers to voters with disabilities at polling places. I collected the answer sheets from those of you who tried to identify the barriers. Here are the barriers identified by the group. The barriers highlighted in bold are accessibility barriers created for this mock polling place.

- 1. Width of the entrance was too narrow – The actual entryway was wide enough, but the way the sign posts were placed created a passage that was less than 32”, the minimum required width for an accessible entry.**
- 2. Sample ballot print was too small.**
- 3. Sample ballot was on a table that was too high for voters who use wheelchairs.**
- 4. Space between the two checker tables was too narrow – the accessible route must be at least 36” wide.**
- 5. Height of the booth – There were no booths at a height that is accessible for people who use wheelchairs.**
- 6. No accessible voting machine – There was only the option of optical scan, a technology that excludes some voters with disabilities. Accessible machines should include options such as magnification, sip and puff technology, audio, larger keypad, ability to increase font sizes, and ability to change font and background colors.**

7. Height of the “Thank You for Voting” sign was too low – The sign was at the entrance/exit. It must be at least 84” from ground level.

8. Tablecloth in the Demonstration Area is too long, creating a hazard for people with mobility devices.

The following are other issues identified by participants. Many of them are not related to accessibility for persons with disabilities. Others do address a disability issue but the structure of the polling place did not create a barrier. Please see comments next to some of the disability issues and how they may be addressed.

9. Location of Signs.
10. Monolingual Language scanner – language access, not disability.
11. Written instructions for the deaf or hard of hearing. – This is a good point and should be available if there is a real ballot. Also, paper and pen or a white board are also other ideas that may be used to accommodate.
12. Need extra pens and paper.
13. Magnifying devices – There were magnifying devices.
14. Signs all in English – language, not disability requirement.
15. Signs require good vision – The signs actually met the minimum font requirements.
16. Physical mobility assumed.
17. Red signs may not be easy to read – The color of the signs is not regulated.
18. No sitting option for marking the ballot. – If there is a lowered booth, chairs should be available should a voter request it.
19. No voting rights signs – Not required.
20. Seating is facing the wrong way – Seating is not required.
21. Blind person. How do I know where to go? – This is not an issue for accessibility. A person who needs assistance, can either bring someone to assist or request assistance at the polls as an accommodation to his or her disability.
22. Sample ballot only printed.
23. Table in the Middle of the Room.

**The next time you go to your polling place, look for the accessibility features and barriers.
I bet you can find something!**