



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**BOARD OF ELECTIONS**  
WASHINGTON, DC



## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance**

### **Overview and Purpose:**

The right to vote is a fundamental American principle and a cornerstone of democracy that must be safeguarded and encouraged for all. The District of Columbia Board of Elections (DCBOE) is dedicated to ensuring that every resident of the District has equal access to the voting process. To achieve this, we provide comprehensive and practical voter access training to our election workers, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively assist senior citizens and people with disabilities.

During the recent election season, DCBOE again recruited an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Team to assist the ADA Coordinator ensure operationally accessible vote centers across the city.

### **Election Worker Training:**

The ADA Coordinator trained election workers serving as Voter Assistance Clerks (VAC) on Title II of the ADA, compliance, awareness, and disability etiquette during the recent election cycle. The voter access and disability rights etiquette section of the election worker training class was revamped to focus on practical application of theoretical knowledge. Election workers learned how to set up voting machines in an accessible manner, following the legal dimensions provided by the ADA and as interpreted by the Department of Justice.

### **Voter Access:**

During the 2024 General Election, DCBOE introduced the Accessible Remote Ballot (ARB) with Electronic Ballot Return feature. Previously, while the ARB was available, voters needed to print their ballots and return them via U.S. mail or drop box. With the new Electronic Ballot Return option, eligible voters with disabilities could mark and submit their ballots electronically through the secure Omni Ballot portal. Historically, the system averaged between one and three users per election. However, for the 2024 General Election, over 30 voters utilized the portal to return their ballots electronically.

DCBOE partnered with disability rights advocacy groups, including Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services, to reach a consensus on identifying and addressing accessibility issues at several vote centers. The ADA Coordinator worked closely with the Voter Education and Outreach Division to bring the voting machines to meetings at nursing homes, disability-focused organizations, and schools, such as Gallaudet University. These efforts aimed to educate senior citizens and individuals with disabilities on how to register to vote and cast ballots. Additionally, an accessibility hotline was available to assist voters with any questions regarding voting access. The

following language was printed in the Voter Guide, which was available in print and online:

If you need a reasonable accommodation to vote, have questions concerning these services, or would like to receive this information in an alternative language or format (e.g., braille, large print), please email the ADA/Language Access Coordinator at [ada@dcboe.org](mailto:ada@dcboe.org) or call (202) 727-5411 (711 TTY).

The phone number indicated was forwarded to the ADA Coordinator's DCBOE cell phone and was answered during the hours of 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.

**Interagency Collaboration:**

The ADA Coordinator partnered with representatives from the following agencies to ensure that vote centers were both structurally and operationally accessible on Election Day:

- Department of General Services
- DC Department of Transportation
- DC Department of Corrections
- Office of Disability Rights
- The Mayor's Office for the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing
- The Office of Human Rights
- The DC Commission on Persons with Disabilities.

**Vote Center Accessibility:**

The ADA Coordinator surveyed all twenty-five early vote centers to verify their structural and operational accessibility. A team of eighteen election workers was recruited and trained to be a part of the ADA Compliance team. They assisted the ADA Coordinator with inspecting all seventy-five vote centers to ensure accessibility on Election Day. Additionally, they assisted Site Coordinators and election workers with maintaining the integrity of the vote centers with periodic checks while centers were open. DCBOE implemented temporary modifications to address structurally inaccessible vote centers; specifically, temporary ramps were installed at Barry Farms Recreation Center, Columbia Heights Recreation Center, Covenant Baptist Church, Nalle Elementary School, and Shepherd Elementary.

In addition to surveying all Vote Centers, the ADA Coordinator evaluated each of the fifty-five ballot drop boxes around the city, to ensure that they were accessible to voters with disabilities.

**Language Access:**

DCBOE deployed qualified interpreters for Mandarin, Spanish, and American Sign Language (ASL) to designated Vote Centers during Early Voting and on Election Day to provide on-demand interpreting services. Accessibility Poll Pads (iPads) equipped with

online Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) functionality were available at each vote center that did not have an on-site interpreter. Additionally, election-related documents and forms were translated for voters with limited or no English proficiency. These included voter registration applications, “What Every Voter Needs to Know” posters for Vote Centers, Voter Guides, and “Time Off to Vote” fliers for employees and students.

**Signage:**

The following signs were included in each ADA/Language Access Signage kit used at each vote center:

- Contact the Site Coordinator
- Elevator Voting Location Sign (English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (left pointing arrow)  
(English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (right pointing arrow)  
(English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (left pointing arrow)  
(English/Mandarin)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (right pointing arrow)  
(English/Mandarin)
- Accessible Entrance Hotline Sign/Voter Access  
(English/Spanish) ● Accessible Entrance Hotline  
Sign/Voter Access (Mandarin)
- Accessible Parking Sign  
(English/Spanish) ● Accessible  
Parking Sign (Mandarin)
- Multi-language Interpreter Available Sign

**Areas of Concern:**

**Vote Center Operations Manual:**

The Vote Center Operations Manual is not accessible for limited English proficient and non-English proficient District residents who wish to work for DCBOE during the election season.

**Opportunity for improvement:** DCBOE will explore developing electronic and/or PDF versions of the election worker training manual to accommodate individuals with disabilities that utilize screen readers. This will require extensive review by the ADA Coordinator to ensure appropriate reading order for screen readers.

**Language Access:**

All signs were not translated into all languages.

**Opportunity for improvement:** DCBOE will explore translating all signage in all six languages specified in the Language Access Act of 2004 (Amharic, French, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese).