

MINUTES – DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY  
NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 3, 2023 @ 1:30 PM

Pursuant to Section 92-3.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee will be meeting remotely using interactive conference technology. Members of the public may have participated in the meeting via Zoom.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Patricia Morrissey, Chair  
James Gashel, Vice Chair  
Kathryn Keim  
Sheryl Nelson

PROCEEDINGS

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee was called to order by Chair Morrissey at 1:30 p.m.

II. Roll Call

All members of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee were present at the meeting with the exceptions of Committee Members Anand and Nelson.

III. Approval of minutes for the September 5, 2023 meeting

Committee Member Keim made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of September 5, 2023, which was seconded by Vice Chair Gashel, and approved by the Committee.

IV. Report on the status of recommendations made to the Office of Elections by the Committee

Ms. Bueno provided a status report on the Committee's recommendations:

- Committee recommended OE to look at ways to streamline the ballot return process: Ms. Bueno reported that OE met with Enhanced Voting

to discuss simplifying the delivery and return process for electronic ballots. She outlined the processes for receiving, marking, and returning the electronic ballot. In particular, she highlighted that they are working with the vendor to develop a “single sign on” to consolidate steps. She mentioned that Enhanced Voting is working on creating a demonstration HTML ballot, which OE will use to incorporate into future voter education. Additionally, she shared plans to schedule a demonstration of the process from Enhanced Voting in a future meeting.

Vice Chair Gashel expressed positive feedback on the streamlined process.

Donald Sakamoto, Chair for the City & County of Honolulu Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, asked about the process for voters to update their signature, mentioning that people with disabilities sometimes have signatures that change. Further, he asked if ballot tracking will be available in the next election.

Ms. Bueno relayed that voters should contact their County Elections Divisions directly for further instruction on how to update their signature, and confirmed that the ballot tracking system, BallotTrax, will be available in the next election.

V. Discussion on effective voting accessibility strategies Marlene Sallo, Executive Director, National Disability Rights Network

Ms. Sallo shared examples of challenges that her organization has identified regarding elections nationwide, these include: the inability to conduct surveys to assess accessibility at polling places due to COVID, curbside voting restrictions in a number of states, placement of ballot drop boxes in locations that are not accessible, access to voting for residents in long term care facilities, access to electronic ballot delivery systems, and ID verification issues.

Chair Morrissey and Vice Chair Gashel asked Ms. Sallo to speak further on electronic ballot delivery systems in Massachusetts, particularly on the verification process.

Ms. Sallo shared that during COVID, voters emailed back their voted electronic ballots. She was unsure of the current process and will email the Committee more information including the vendor that was used.

Chair Morrissey expressed interest in partnering with organizations like the League of Women Voters to conduct candidate forums focusing on disability issues.

Louis Erteschik, Hawaii Disability Rights Center, expressed to the Committee that their office can assist in advocating for any upcoming legislation, including providing testimony. He added that they currently conduct voter registration drives through their HAVA funds.

Ms. Sallo shared that another concern is reaching voters displaced by the Maui wildfires. She recommended that the Committee should keep an open line of communication with Federal and local agencies to reach these voters.

VI. Presentation from the Office of Elections on voter outreach efforts

Ms. Bueno shared the role of the Voter Services section at OE and provided an overview of the office's voter education efforts, which include developing media campaigns, writing press releases, and conducting media interviews. She added that moving forward, OE will work with media to pursue stories to cover election accessibility.

Ms. Bueno continued that OE works with partner organizations to identify community events that the office can participate in. She shared that most recently, OE participated in the Young at Heart Expo and an event hosted by United Self Help. Mr. Akamine added that OE works with the Neighbor Island chapters of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and has several voter education presentations scheduled with other community groups this year.

Vice Chair Gashel shared that the Honolulu NFB holds a monthly meeting and recommends that OE attends. Additionally, he asked that OE include their outreach efforts in the monthly report to the Committee.

Chair Morrissey asked whether outreach is done specifically for high school students.

Ms. Bueno responded that OE carries out the futureHIvoter Program, which works with the Department of Education to provide high school students statewide the opportunity to register to vote. She shared that OE also participates in events for young audiences including the SPIN Conferences and Footsteps to Transition Fairs.

Committee member Nelson joined the meeting at 2:30pm.

VII. Discussion relating to mobile voting, electronic ballot delivery, and return process

The Committee had no further discussion for this agenda item.

VIII. General discussion on issues for voters with disabilities

Chair Morrissey said that she will complete the following:

- Reach out to the League of Women Voters to discuss a partnership in conducting disability focused candidate forums via Zoom.
- Draft a letter to the legislature to express that the Committee can help in drafting the language of the ballot questions.
- Reach out to the County Elections Divisions to invite them to the next meeting.

Chair Morrissey also shared that she is interested in starting an e-mail newsletter to let the community know what the Committee is doing. She established that she would be responsible for writing the newsletters.

Committee Member Keim suggested that several government agencies may have a database of individuals with disabilities, such as the Department of Taxation, which could be helpful in generating an email list.

IX. Adjournment

Committee Member Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Vice Chair Gashel, and approved by the Committee.

To: Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

From: Office of Elections

Re: Status Report Relating to Recommendations Received by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **October 3, 2023** meeting:

- Outreach

The Office of Elections have secured voter education presentations and resource tabling with the following organizations:

- United Self Help
- Hawaii Youth Challenge Academy
- Active Senior Fair
- White Cane Walk and Vision Awareness
- Hope Services Hawaii
- East Hawaii Disability Forum
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- DOE Transition Coordinator quarterly meeting
- Access To Independence
- Access To Independence Youth

OE recently disseminated its first e-newsletter for the 2024 Elections to various groups and organizations. A link to subscribe to the Office of Elections' e-newsletter has been added to the Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee webpage.

- Election laws referencing “voter with special needs”

The committee requested that OE review the election laws and identify statutes that include the term “voter with special needs” and look into amending the term to “voter with accessibility needs”.

In reviewing the state capitol's website, which provides the text of all state statutes, OE identified HRS §§ 11-10.5, 11-10.6, 11-107, and 15-5 as referencing the term “voter with special needs.”

Of these statutes, HRS §§ 11-10.5 and 11-10.6, were changed to “voter with special needs” with the passage of Act 14, SLH 2023. The website is expected to be updated by the end of the year by the Revisor of Statutes with the updated language.

In regard to the remaining statutes, HRS §§ 11-107 and 15-5, they use the term “voter with special needs” to refer not only to voters who may have a disability but also to voters who have circumstances that would not otherwise allow them to receive and return a ballot by mail in a timely manner (e.g. a military, overseas, or similar voter who is out of the state). These voters are permitted to receive and return their ballot by electronic transmission. Given that these statutes are not solely specific to accessibility and there could be unforeseen consequences from amending them, we do not plan on submitting a bill regarding them.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **September 5, 2023** meeting:

- The committee recommended the Office of Elections to look at ways to streamline the ballot return process.

The Office of Elections is working with Enhanced Voting to streamline the electronic ballot delivery and return processes.

Receiving the electronic ballot – The voter will receive an email from their County Elections Division with instructions on how to access their electronic ballot using a link that will direct the voter to an online ballot delivery and return portal. The voter logs into the portal using credentials associated with their voter registration.

Marking the electronic ballot – Once the voter is logged on to the portal, the voter may choose to mark their ballot within the portal or mark offline using their own compatible device.

Returning the electronic ballot – After voting the ballot, the voter has the option to return their voted ballot through the portal. The voter will still have the option to return their voted ballot via email, mail or fax.

Demonstration HTML Ballot and Portal – The vendor is finalizing the HTML demonstration ballot that will be available to the public and incorporated within the office’s voter education efforts.

The Office of Elections is targeting to test the system in the coming weeks to review the workflow. The Office of Elections will continue to keep the committee apprised on its progress.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **May 23, 2023** meeting:

- The committee recommended the Office of Elections to look at ways to streamline the ballot return process.

The Office of Elections is working with Enhanced Voting to streamline the electronic ballot delivery and return processes.

Receiving the electronic ballot – The voter will receive an email from their County Elections Division with instructions on how to access their electronic ballot using a link that will direct the voter to an online ballot delivery and return portal. The voter logs into the portal using credentials associated with their voter registration.

Marking the electronic ballot – Once the voter is logged on to the portal, the voter may choose to mark their ballot within the portal or mark offline using their own compatible device.

Returning the electronic ballot – After voting the ballot, the voter has the option to return their voted ballot through the portal. The voter will still have the option to return their voted ballot via email, mail or fax.

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The Office of Elections is targeting to test the system in the coming weeks to review the workflow. The Office of Elections will continue to keep the committee apprised on its progress.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **February 15, 2023** meeting:

- Legislation relating to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

Senate Bill 179 passed through the Legislature and has been enacted as Act 14 renaming the committee to the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. Likewise, the name change also applies to the county committees renaming them to County Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committees.

The webpage has been updated with the new name.

The committee requested assistance from the Office of Elections to inquire with the County Elections Divisions regarding the number of alternate format ballot (AFB) voters.

There are about 300 voters that have requested to receive an AFB ballot statewide.

The committee requested for the Office of Elections to arrange for a representative who manages the electronic ballot process to attend a future meeting

The Office of Elections has arranged a meeting on May 19 with James Gashel and an Office of Election staff who manages the electronic ballot process.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee meeting on **December 7, 2022**.

- The committee requested assistance from the Office of Elections to disseminate the committee's 2022 Elections Voter Experience Survey.

The Office of Elections assisted in the dissemination of the 2022 Elections Voter Experience Survey to state departments, county agencies, organizations that work directly with persons with disabilities and special needs, and media. The following confirmed dissemination of the survey within their network via avenues such as newsletters and social media platforms.

- Hawaii State DD Council
  - SPIN Network
  - DVR/DHS service for the Blind
  - Access To Independence
  - Aloha Independent Living Hawaii
  - Hawaii Club House network
  - Hawaii SAAC Network
  - Lanakila Multi-purpose Senior center
  - Oahu Veterans Center
  - Maui Economic Opportunity Senior Group
- The committee requested assistance in drafting a bill to be submitted to the Legislature to consider amending the committee name from Special Needs Advisory Committee to the Statewide Voters Elections Accessibility Advisory Committee. Likewise, the bill also includes a request to amend the committee names for all four counties for consistency.

The Office of Elections drafted a bill that has since been introduced by both legislative bodies, House Bill 131 and Senate Bill 179.

- The committee agreed to have written meeting minutes to replace written summaries as its official record of meetings.

The Office of Elections will provide assistance in drafting minutes to serve as the committee's official record of meetings. The minutes from the December 7, 2022 meeting were forwarded to committee members for review and for approval at the February 15, 2023 meeting. Approved minutes will be posted to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee webpage and the Office of Elections will keep on file all written minutes on behalf of the committee.