



PATRICIA MORRISSEY
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

**STATE OF HAWAII
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES - DRAFT

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY
NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

JANUARY 12, 2024 @ 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
Ramoda Anand
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 1:37 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 Member Keim.

III. Approval of minutes for the November 14, 2023 meeting

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of November 14, 2023, which was seconded by Chair Morrissey, and approved

by the Committee.

Committee Member Nelson joined the meeting at 1:41pm.

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

Anthony Akamine, Election Information Specialist, Office of Elections (OE), provided a status report on Enhanced Voting. He shared that Enhanced Voting and OE completed a demonstration ballot for the public to practice marking the ballot. The demonstration ballot will be posted on OE's website at elections.hawaii.gov.

Nedielyn Bueno, Voter Services Section Head, OE, shared that the Committee received a complaint that Agenda IV "Report on the status of recommendations made to the Office of Elections by the Committee" is insufficiently descriptive.

Vice Chair Gashel shared that he is frustrated by the complaint, however, acknowledges that the Committee needs to comply. He shared that he wants to have a progress report from OE during every meeting. Committee Member Nelson expressed that she doesn't think the agenda needs to be detailed. She suggested that the agenda refer to OE's website for more details.

Lisa Seikai Darcy, Maui County Healing Solutions for Homelessness, expressed her concerns about elections. She stated that if you do not have an address, you have to choose between voting in the Primary and General Election. She also stated that residents of Hana cannot travel to Wailuku to vote at a voter service center. Ms. Darcy recommended the following to improve elections in Maui: open more voter service centers, provide free bus transportation on Election Day.

Vice Chair Gashel suggested that Ms. Darcy get in contact with the Maui County Elections Division to inquire about an accessibility needs committee for Maui County. Committee Member Nelson expressed that Ms. Darcy's recommendation for free bus fare is a transportation issue and not a responsibility of OE. Chair Morrissey shared that OE and the Maui County Elections Division would relay the recommendation to the transportation department.

V. General discussion on issues for voters with disabilities

Brian Hausner, Aloha Independent Living Maui, expressed that as a person with a print disability, he relies on voting machines to read ballot names and

questions. He asked why the Committee does not have the ability to request that more voter service center locations be established by the Maui County Elections Division.

Chair Morrissey shared that she wants someone from the City & County of Honolulu to discuss the process of how they draft the language for the charter amendment ballot questions. She also suggested that a volunteer corp could help people read and understand the ballot, and an audio ballot should be available.

Ms. Darcy shared that she personally assisted dozens of people with disabilities voting for the first time at the voter service center. She suggested that there be a separate line made for people with anxiety or disabilities because these voters may not have the physical or mental capacity to wait in lines for hours.

Donald Sakamoto, Chair for the City & County of Honolulu Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, expressed that voter service centers are important to serve those with special needs and shared that he is concerned about voters who are both deaf and blind. He also shared that he and Vice Chair Gashel are working on a bill for better transportation on the Neighbor Islands.

Vice Chair Gashel responded to Mr. Sakamoto's concern that he believes the accessible electronic ballot will provide a means of braille access and asked that OE confirm this feature. He further expressed that some voters will still need assistance regardless of the accessibility features, and wanted to emphasize that it is federal law that voters have this right.

Chair Morrissey asked if the accessible electronic ballot has an audio component. Mr. Akamine explained that audio ballots are available at voter service centers and accessible electronic ballots are compatible with screen readers. Vice Chair Gashel commented that there may not be a need for a separate audio ballot given that free screen readers are available.

Mr. Hausner suggested that there is a local number to call to help read and understand the ballot questions. Mr. Sakamoto expressed his support for this, and added that phone support be provided in different languages. Continuing the conversation on audio resources, Vice Chair Gashel suggested that the digital voter guide be available through audio format.

VI. Adjournment

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