



PATRICIA MORRISSEY
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

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

DRAFT MINUTES

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

December 10, 2025 @ 1:30 PM

Pursuant to Section 92-3.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee met remotely using interactive conference technology. The video of the meeting may be viewed on our website at:

<https://elections.hawaii.gov/about-us/boards-and-commissions/elections-accessibility-needs-advisory-committee/>.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Patricia Morrissey, Chair
James Gashel, Vice Chair
Lou Ann Blake
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 PM.

II. Introduction of new Committee Member Lou Ann Blake

Committee Member Blake expressed her appreciation for being part of the Committee. She shared that she has over 20 years of experience advocating for accessible voting, including 19 years with the National Federation of the Blind where she led non-legal voting advocacy efforts. Her work involved evaluating ballot marking devices and vote-by-mail systems, providing feedback to vendors, and presenting to election officials and advocates.

Currently, she serves as an expert witness in four accessible vote-by-mail cases, three in the U.S. and one in Canada. She looks forward to contributing to the committee's work.

III. Roll call and determination of a quorum

All members of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee were present at the meeting.

IV. Meeting minutes from the May 20, 2025 meeting

a) Approval of written minutes

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of May 20, 2025, which was seconded by Committee Member Nelson, and approved by the Committee.

b) Approval of written minutes for the executive session

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion to approve the executive session minutes for the meeting of May 20, 2025, which was seconded by Committee Member Nelson, and approved by the Committee.

V. Update from the Office of Elections on the status of the Committee's previous recommendations relating to voter education, outreach, and accessible voting

Raymund de Vega, Elections Specialist, Office of Elections (OE), shared the following update:

Voting Statistics for Voters with Accessibility Needs – Per Chair Morrissey's request, OE relayed voting statistics from the 2024 Elections provided by the County Elections Divisions. Mr. de Vega recited statistics for the 2024 General Election and reminded the Committee and public that the information is published in the meeting materials posted to the Committee's page.

Request for Voter Contact Information – Per Chair Morrissey's instructions, OE relayed the Committee's following request: For the County Elections Divisions to email voters who have requested an accessible electronic ballot, asking if the voters would be willing to share their contact information with the Committee for outreach purposes. OE did not receive interest from the counties in participating. Mr. de Vega commented that should the Committee conduct future surveys, OE recommends including a field for participants to provide their contact information for the Committee's use.

Accessibility Information and Candidate Information – Per the Committee’s recommendations that OE increase awareness of accessible voting options and increase visibility of the EANAC during interactions with candidates, OE has made additions to the Candidate Manual. Mr. de Vega shared that the manual will now include a “Voter Accessibility and Assistance” section that informs candidates about accessible voting options and provides information about the Committee and their duties. He added that the manual was published to OE’s website on December 9, 2025.

VI. Discussion of holding statewide and county town halls on the value of mail-in voting

Ann Silva Williams provided testimony sharing her positive experience as a blind voter in the general election, emphasizing the importance of having both a private and secret ballot, successfully using ballot tracking and accessible voting tools, and expressing concern over efforts to restrict such access without credible evidence of fraud.

Daintry Bartoldus, Executive Director of the Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities, provided testimony voicing strong support for the continued use of mail-in ballots, emphasizing their importance in allowing individuals, especially those with developmental disabilities across the islands, to vote independently and at their own pace.

Nikhilananda, speaking on behalf of himself and the Green Party of Hawaii, provided testimony expressing strong support for universal mail-in voting due to its convenience and ability to increase voter participation, while also advocating for expanded in-person voting options and regular audits to ensure trust and transparency in the voting process.

Lou Erteschik, Executive Director of the Hawaii Disability Rights Center, provided testimony voicing strong support for mail-in voting, emphasizing its critical role in improving accessibility for voters with disabilities, while also recommending more in-person polling places and audits to maintain trust in the system.

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion that the Advisory Committee hold a public forum to address how vote by mail contributes to election accessibility; the forum to be arranged by OE, using Zoom, and held for in-person attendance at a convenient Honolulu location, scheduled, to the extent possible, during February 2025. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Nelson, and approved by the Committee.

Vice Chair Gashel proposed holding a single public forum in February 2025 to maximize visibility and impact during the legislative session, which runs from January 21 to early May. He emphasized that while the agenda suggests forums on all islands, a centralized event in Honolulu with Zoom access for statewide participation would be more practical and timely. The goal is to ensure the issue receives attention early in the session. Chair Morrissey invited and acknowledged his comments.

VII. Discussion of amendment to current law to place Chair and Vice Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee (EANAC) on the Elections Commission

Committee Member Blake expressed strong support for the proposal to include the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee on the Elections Commission. She emphasized the importance of improving the Commission's understanding of the voting needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the ability to vote by mail privately and independently. She urged the Committee to move forward with the proposal.

Committee Member Keim voiced strong support for the proposal to include the Committee Chair and Vice Chair on the Elections Commission. She expressed willingness to formally make or support a motion on the matter and emphasized the importance of increasing visibility and influence for the Committee. She noted that the proposed measure aligns with broader goals of enhancing representation and impact.

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion that the Advisory Committee request OE's assistance to prepare a bill, providing that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee be designated as members of the Elections Commission, and provide a draft to the Advisory Committee by January 10, 2025. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Nelson, and approved by the Committee.

Vice Chair Gashel shared observations from attending two Elections Commission meetings. He noted that while many public testifiers raised concerns about vote-by-mail accessibility, none of the Commissioners addressed accessibility issues, including in-person voting. He emphasized the Commission's lack of awareness and expertise in this area and recommended legislative action to appoint individuals with accessibility knowledge to the Commission. He believes this would elevate the importance of accessibility and improve representation of voters with disabilities.

Anthony Akamine, Elections Specialist, OE, clarified that to submit a bill for consideration in the 2026 legislative session, the deadline is December 26,

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2025. He confirmed the Office is willing to assist with drafting the bill and potentially submitting it on behalf of the committee, pending internal review.

Vice Chair Gashel acknowledged the importance of meeting the deadline and proposed amending his original motion to change the submission date from January 10, 2026, to December 23, 2025. Chair Morrissey and other Committee Members agreed the bill language would be simple and could be finalized quickly. The amended motion was unanimously approved.

Vice Chair Gashel reminded the Committee about the open recruitment announcement for new members, requesting that the Office of Elections ensure it is posted on the Elections Committee's page. He noted that while there may not be an immediate need, vacancies could arise soon.

Chair Morrissey announced her departure from the Committee, having extended her term beyond July until the Committee reached a minimum of four members. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and offered to continue supporting the Committee informally through drafting and attending future meetings.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Morrissey made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Committee Member Keim, and approved by the Committee at 2:19 PM.