



JAMES GASHEL
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

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

MINUTES

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

April 23, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

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:

James Gashel, Chair
Lou Ann Blake, 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 Vice Chair Gashel at 10:00 AM.

II. Roll call and determination of a quorum

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

III. Approval of written minutes from the February 18, 2026 meeting

Committee Member Keim made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of February 18, 2026, which was seconded by Committee Member Blake, and approved by the Committee.

IV. Review of Report on Accessibility Impact of Voting by Mail

Raymund de Vega, Elections Specialist, Office of Elections (OE), presented the Report on Accessibility Impact of Voting by Mail. He explained that the report summarizes discussion and testimony from the Committee's December 10, 2025 and February 18, 2026 meetings, showing support of voting by mail.

Committee Members expressed strong support for the report and agreed it should be published separately from meeting minutes and posted prominently on the Office of Elections website. Additionally, the Committee discussed their recommendations for distribution, including that it be sent to legislators, election offices, and disability-related agencies and organizations.

V. Presentation on voting in Hawaii by Office of Elections

Mr. de Vega delivered a comprehensive presentation on Hawaii's voting process. The presentation covered voter registration requirements, the distinction between primary and general elections, the voting by mail process, ballot processing, and accessible voting options.

Donald Sakamoto asked how counties verify witness signatures for voters who cannot provide a traditional signature on mail ballots, especially when ballots are deposited in drop boxes. Mr. de Vega indicated that signature verification procedures are handled by the County Elections Divisions and advised Mr. Sakamoto to follow-up with the Honolulu Elections Division. Vice Chair Gashel noted that voters using the accessible electronic ballot are not required to provide a signature.

Additionally, Mr. Sakamoto reported that he experienced inconsistent audio levels on ballot marking devices during the 2024 Elections. Mr. de Vega confirmed the issue had been escalated to the vendor at that time, and that additional audio testing will be conducted to prevent the issue from occurring in the future. Mr. de Vega added that voters can adjust volume settings on the devices, and emphasized that the audio recordings, not the voting equipment, were the source of the issue.

Committee Members discussed broader questions about voter service centers, including the testing of ballot marking devices and the training of election workers at the locations.

The Office of Elections clarified that counties are responsible for training voter service center staff. Committee Members emphasized the need for counties to test accessible machines thoroughly, maintain spare equipment, and train workers on troubleshooting procedures.

VI. Discussion and decision making on appointing a new Committee Chair

Committee Member Blake made a motion to nominate Vice Chair Gashel for the Committee Chair position, which was seconded by Committee Member Keim, and approved by the Committee.

Committee Member Keim made a motion to nominate Committee Member Blake for the Vice Chair position, which was seconded by Committee Member Nelson, and approved by the Committee.

VII. Discuss and schedule statewide 2026 accessible voting outreach

Mr. Sakamoto provided testimony encouraging stronger collaboration between the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee (EANAC) and county-specific committees, including more outreach to Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii County.

Mr. de Vega reported that the Office of Elections had conducted 30 outreach events between 2025 and 2026, including presentations and Verity Touch Writer demonstrations for the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, Hoopono Services for the Blind, SPIN Conference, Day at the Capitol, Blind Veterans Group, and other disability-focused organizations. He added that they will be participating in upcoming events, including the ATRC Resource Day, DOE Quarterly Transition Meeting, the annual White Cane and Vision Awareness Event, and will be conducting additional Verity Touch Writer demonstrations.

Committee Members suggested broadening outreach efforts before the primary and general elections by engaging statewide consumer groups, senior events, Neighbor Island disability organizations, and DOE programs that support students who are eligible for voter pre-registration. They also emphasized the value of in-person demonstrations with ballot marking devices and encouraged outreach to disability services centers at UH campuses. Committee Members agreed to share contact information for relevant organizations directly with OE staff, and asked that staff keep the Committee informed of upcoming outreach events so members can participate when available.

For 2027 planning, Chair Gashel emphasized the importance of preparing an

updated post-election accessibility survey in advance of Election Day, with the intention to review and finalize the survey at the next Committee meeting.

VIII. Set meeting schedule through the end of 2026

The Committee confirmed three meeting dates for the remainder of the year: June 24, September 30, and December 9. Additionally, the Committee agreed to hold the meetings virtually, and at 1:00 PM, to accommodate Committee Members' schedules and work demands for OE staff during the peak months of the election year.

Several Committee Members expressed interest in returning to in-person or hybrid meetings after the election cycle. Additionally, Chair Gashel suggested that all future agendas should include a standing item inviting public testimony on accessibility needs.

IX. Adjournment

Committee Member Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Committee Member Blake, and approved by the Committee at 11:30 AM.