



Errors May Keep You from Voting Charles Reichardt Systems Advocate

The Help America Vote Act, which aims to improve voting accuracy and access for people with disabilities requires that a new database be developed, which compares voter information to other government data. Mismatched or duplicate records are then flagged. Problems occur when a potential voter incorrectly documents or forgets to document a life changing event such as a change of address, name change or variation in personal data and then tries to register to vote.

It is these kinds of errors in the New York State database which could keep you from voting if the errors aren't resolved. The New York State Board of Elections has found about 45,000 inconsistent voter records, which means that potentially thousands of people could be turned away from the polls on Election Day. So don't let one of those people be you!

See Error on Page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Errors May Keep You From Voting
- 1** NYS HAVA Update
- 2** Special Education Refresher
- 3** Voting: Internet Investigation and Research
- 3** Computer Classes
- 4** Barrier Free Voting Poster Available
- 4** Calendar of Events

New York State HAVA Update Helen Benlisa Project HAVA Coordinator

Back in December of 2007, U.S. District Court Judge Gary Sharpe ordered New York State, due to its less than stellar record with implementing the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), to install ballot marking devices (BMD) in every polling site in the State by the September Primary in 2008. At the same time, the New York State Board of Elections (NYSBOE) had to submit an updated plan to the Court outlining its strategy for replacement of lever machines in 2009. Part of that plan detailed a timeline for ordering, testing and deploying BMDs to the counties. The timeline was constructed taking into consideration the lawsuit with the Department of Justice and the lead-time the counties would need to work out their local logistics and get their staff and poll workers trained on the BMDs. Because of the relatively short window NYSBOE has to go through the process of accepting, testing and delivering the machines to the counties, sticking to the strict schedule is an absolute must.

There are approximately 7,500 BMDs on collective order for New York State's 62 counties. As of early August all but about 500 of the BMDs received acceptance testing and were delivered to their ultimate destinations. The end date for this whole process was supposed to be July 31, 2008, but due to delays on the manufacturing end of things the timeline has stretched out. Of course, a la Murphy's Law, there were a few other glitches. Some machines were delivered without a crucial apparatus, so testing couldn't occur until those pieces arrived. Other machines were delivered with the wrong ballot configuration and rendered unusable for the county that ordered them. The NYSBOE testing unit has been doing everything possible to make the process run smoothly. The delays have definitely put a kink in the works for the county boards as they still have many details to attend to as well as getting their poll workers trained on the new machines.

See HAVA on Page 2

Special Education Refresher
Jade Pendolf
Vocational Services Manager

HAVA Continued from Page 1

Now that summer is upon us and the new school year will be approaching very soon, I wanted to give parents of students with disabilities some information to think about. The information below is from VESID's Parent's Guide to Special Education. You can check out the rest of the guide at :

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/parentguide.htm>

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If your child is eligible for special education services and/or programs, the Committee must meet to develop a plan to meet your child's unique needs. This plan is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

How is an IEP developed?

The IEP development process must consider:

- your child's strengths;
- your concerns for your child's education;
- the results of your child's individual evaluation;
- the results of any State or district wide tests or assessments; and
- any unique needs related to your child's disability (such as communication needs, behavior, etc.).

The IEP evolves from a discussion that begins with how your child is doing in school (current level of functioning). From that base, the Committee agrees on the goals your child should be working toward. The Committee then discusses the supports, services and modifications the child needs to reach those goals. Finally, the Committee determines where those special education services will be provided (location and placement). The location where services will be provided and the student's placement must be in the least restrictive environment. For preschool children with disabilities, special education services can be delivered in day care, a regular preschool program or other early childhood program in which you have enrolled your child.

Another area of concern is the Statewide Voter Registration Database. This database is meant to work in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicle and Social Security Administration databases to verify voters' identities and contact information. If there is a mismatch in the information, for example if name changes or address changes were incorrectly recorded, that voter may be purged from the system. It would be advisable to double check with your local Board of Elections to ensure you are still listed as a registered voter, otherwise you may be turned away from the polls on Election Day.

If you discover your name has been wrongly purged from the voter rolls – through no fault of your own – you can still vote using a provisional ballot. You can also make a formal complaint about it to NYSBOE. If so, please contact the Center for information on the Administrative Complaint Procedure. This is a law meant to give the disenfranchised voter some redress at the State level. Also, if you have had problems in the past at the polls with ill-informed poll workers or lack of access to the polling site, or, as may happen this fall, difficulties using the BMD at your polling site due to inexperienced or ill-trained poll workers, please contact the Center. Anyone wishing to make a formal complaint has 60 days after the actual occurrence of the problem to do so, but must follow specific guidelines.

If you want more information about the Complaint Procedure or other voting related information, call the Center's HAVA Hotline 888-NYS-HAVA (888-697-4282) and ask for Helen. Or send an email to Helen at nyshava@ccfi.us and write Complaint Procedure Help in the subject line.

Elections will be here before you know it, so make sure you are registered. And if you already are, then inspire others to get registered. We do our country, our communities and ourselves a true service when we make the effort to voice our choice on Election Day!

**Don' forget to check us out
online at:
www.ccfi.us**

See *Special Ed* Page 4

Voting: Internet Investigation and Research

Laurene M. Reichardt

Disability Programs Manager

Voting is a right of every American Citizen *as long you meet the criteria!* Is it a *Constitutional Right?* What does the new "HAVA" law mean and how will it impact me? When did women get the right to vote? Did they have to own land to vote, too?

There are all kinds of questions that come to mind when we discuss the right to vote, the methods of voting, what it means to "run for office," and many, many other topics that arise when the subject of voting is brought up. In the interest of fairness, not to mention the fact that I, a lowly advocate, could not possibly begin to have all of the answers, I am going to share many of the interesting places on the Internet I have found that can answer some questions, generate others, and appeals to a range of ages and interests:

<http://www.ccfi.us/havamain1.html> - The Catskill Center for Independence has been a leader for the right to vote privately and independently for almost two decades. Go here to get the latest updates on the Help America Vote Act of 2002, and on what's happening now.

<http://www.fec.gov/hava/hava.htm> - "Federal Election Commission." HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT OF 2002 (HAVA) - Public Law 107-252.

<http://www.usconstitution.net> - "The US Constitution On-Line." If you *really* want to know if voting is a constitutional right, you can look it up here!

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/researchtools/articlearchives/civics/election/vote.htm> - "Scholastic." This is an article that teachers (and others) can read and use to understand how, historically, America came to get the right to vote. It wasn't easy!

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1873anthony.html> - "Internet Modern History Sourcebook." Here's a dandy article on Women's Suffrage. It is Susan B. Anthony's 1873 speech that she gave after being fined \$100.00 for "casting an 'illegal' vote in the presidential election" in 1872.

http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_histmats_votingrights_esay.htm#voting - "CongressLink." "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided the capstone to many years' efforts to strengthen voting rights for African-Americans." Go to this website to find out why and how.

By no means is this list of websites exhaustive or conclusive. Visit some of them to learn more about voting, how it came to be, and maybe where it's going. YOU decide!

Error continued from page 1

If you have had any life changing events occur lately such as a change of address, name change or anything else that would cause a variation in personal data, you might want to contact your County Board of Elections to check on the accuracy of your information. You don't want to miss your opportunity to vote in such an important presidential election as this one.

If you haven't yet registered to vote, you can contact us here at the Catskill Center for Independence and we can help you with the registration process.

Remember, by exercising your right to vote, you help shape the rest of your life.

The following is a brief listing of some of the informational materials available at the Center.

All material is available in alternative format upon request.

Transitional Services Directory

(For Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie Counties)

How-to Start a Support Group Guide

*A Guide to Disability Rights Laws from
the U.S. Department of Justice*

As with all Center services, all materials are free of charge.

Don't forget to check us out on-line at:

<http://www.ccfi.us>

Computer Classes

If you are interested in learning a little something about using computers or surfing the "Net", please call Ed at the Center to sign-up. Spaces and times will be limited, so don't hesitate to call us at 607-432-8000, or email us at ccfi@ccfi.us

What planning should occur for preschool children as they transition to school-age programs and services?

If your child has been receiving preschool special education programs or services, you and the Committee will need to discuss your child's school program before he or she enters Kindergarten. Sometime during the year before your child is eligible to enter school, the Committee will decide if your child continues to have a disability and/or if he or she continues to require special education programs or services. If so, the Committee on Preschool Special Education will make a referral to the Committee on Special Education.

If eligible, at age five, your child may be recommended to receive special education services or programs in the district's Kindergarten program or other educational setting. However, you are not required to enroll your child in the district's Kindergarten program. Your child may be recommended to receive special education services at home, or while attending a nursery school, day care center or other early childhood program in which you have enrolled your child..

What planning should occur for young adults?

It is also important to plan ahead when your son or daughter becomes a teen-ager so that he or she can prepare for a high school diploma and/or learn skills necessary for employment, postsecondary education and/or community living as an adult. Beginning when your child is age 12, he or she will receive an assessment to determine vocational skills, aptitudes, and interests. By age 14, the Committee will begin discussing your child's goals as an adult, and how he or she can learn the important skills to meet these goals. From this point forward, the IEP will include programs and services to prepare for adult life (transition services) to address your child's hopes and dreams for the future. Transition planning will involve you, your child and the school discussing questions such as:

- What can your child do now to prepare for being an adult? What can you do to help him or her prepare?
- What will your child do after he or she graduates from school? (Or when he or she turns 21 and is no longer eligible to attend school?)
- Will your child go to college? If so, what high school courses should he or she take? What tests will your child take?
- Will your child look for a job right after high school? Will your child need job training while still in school?
- Where will your child live? Does he or she need to learn new skills to live independently?

If you would like more information please contact the Center.

Barrier Free Voting Poster Available

The Northeast ADA&IT Center is providing, free of charge, voting posters to people in their region (NY, NJ, PR and the USVI). If you are outside of this region, please visit www.adata.org to contact your closest ADA Center to check on their availability of this poster.

For more information or to make a request by phone, please feel free to contact Northeast ADA & IT Center at 800-949-4232 (NY, NJ, PR, and USVI). These posters are available on a first come, first serve basis.

Calendar of Events

Video Day

On the last Wednesday of each month, at 2:00 pm, we will be showing a video for anyone who is interested. All videos will deal with some aspect of a disability-related issue and discussions will follow each video.

Space is limited. Please contact us to reserve your space by the close of business the Monday prior to each video showing.

September 27, 2008

Videos for Business: Two videos to assist businesses & employers with understanding the facts about hiring people with disabilities. No Barriers for Business: This video explores how businesses can become "disability -friendly," and Ten Small Business Excuses: Information on the Americans with Disabilities Act and how small businesses need to comply.

October 25, 2008

A Video Guide to (Dis)Ability Awareness: We learn by living and working together. This video provides a fresh point of view and looks at disabilities from many new perspectives through the lives of people who have disabilities themselves.

Lending Closets

The *Catskill Center for Independence* is one of several area agencies to maintain a "lending closet." Among the items to lend are wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, etc. A short list of other participating agencies with a point of contact is as follows:

Delaware County Public Health Nursing - Marcia Bagley,
607-746-8282

Delaware Regional Center
607-865-6551

Hamilton's Farm – Penny Hamilton
607-746-2057 ♦