



AB 545 – ACCESS FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

Introduced 02.07.2023

BACKGROUND

Existing law requires most voting locations be accessible to voters with disabilities and meet the Secretary of State's accessibility guidelines.

Currently, counties offer what is known as "curbside" voting for voters with disabilities. Inside voting locations, many counties provide accessibility aids such as magnifying glasses and signature cards – plastic cards that have a cut out box to line up over a signature line to make it easier for people with disabilities to sign in the required area.

PROBLEM

The accessibility of curbside voting and the availability of auxiliary accessibility aids provided for voters with disabilities varies widely across voting locations.

The minimal requirements in the Elections Code leads to a lack of standardization across the state, as observed in the November 2022 Election.

In many counties, signage providing information about curbside voting is not prominently displayed and voters with disabilities are often unsure of how to attract the attention of poll workers. Accessibility aids are often forgotten in boxes behind the voter check-in station, rather than being prominently displayed.

SOLUTION

AB 545 would make accessible voting more available by requiring all in-person voting locations to offer curbside voting. In 2020, curbside voting was required at all voting locations to mitigate the health risks of voting during a pandemic, proving that it's feasible.

AB 545 requires signage concerning accessible curbside voting be prominently displayed, to increase voters' awareness of the options available to them. This bill also requires voting locations to establish a method for a voter with a disability to contact a poll worker in order to vote outside the voting location, which could take the form of a posted phone number, a doorbell device, or the stationing of a poll worker outside the polling location.

AB 545 further removes the outdated requirement that voters with disabilities must swear under oath that they are unable to mark a ballot.

SUPPORT

Disability Rights California (Sponsor)

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