

ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY

Voting Access Program



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DISCLAIMER

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WHO WE ARE

Mission

Disability Rights Maine advances justice and equality by enforcing rights and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine.

Values

DRM believes the disability rights movement is inseparable from the human rights movements for racial, economic and gender equity. We renew our commitment to eradicate ableism, racism, sexism and bigotry, and to dismantle institutional and structural disadvantage.

HOW TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE

Call to schedule an intake: 800.452.1948

Complete an online intake: <https://drme.org/online-intake-form>

What to expect when contacting DRM:
<https://drme.org/blog/2018-02-26>



PRIMER

- Disability does NOT impact the right to vote.
- Guardianship does not impact the right to vote in Maine.
- People with disabilities have the right to vote privately and independently under federal law.
- People with disabilities can get assistance in the voting process, if they want it.

IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

- August 5: Absentee ballot requests open
- October 15th: Deadline to register to vote by mail and online (after this voter registration must be done in person at Town/City Office or on Election Day)
- October 31 at 5:00pm: Traditional absentee ballot requests close
- October 31st at 5:00pm to November 5th at 8:00pm: “Special Circumstances Ballot” period
- November 5th: Election Day
 - All absentee ballots must be received by the municipal clerk before 8:00pm to be counted

VOTER ELIGIBILITY + REGISTRATION

WHO CAN VOTE IN MAINE?

- A United States Citizen;
- Will be 18 years old by election day;
- A resident of the town/city where they will be voting.

If a person meets these requirements- they can vote in Maine.

VOTER REGISTRATION QUICK FACTS

- A person must be registered to vote before they can cast their ballot.
- You must update your voter registration every time you move!
- A person registers to vote in the City/Town where they live. The local Clerk's Office manages voter registration and elections.
 - If you live in Augusta, you must register to vote with the Augusta City Clerk's Office

VOTER REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

When a person registers to vote, they must show documents that prove who they are and where they live.

Non-exhaustive list of accepted documents: Driver's license, state ID, student ID, passport, military ID, tribal nations ID card, birth certificate, social security card, government benefits letter, utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, piece of mail

HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE

- At Town/City Clerk's Office
 - Find your Town/City Office [here](#)
- [Online](#) before October 15th
 - Must be able to provide one of the following numbers: driver's license, state ID, SSN
- [By mail](#) before October 15th
 - Click the link above to complete a voter registration card. Then mail it to the Town/City Office with photocopies of identity and residency verification.
- On Election Day
 - You can register to vote on election day at the [polling place!](#)

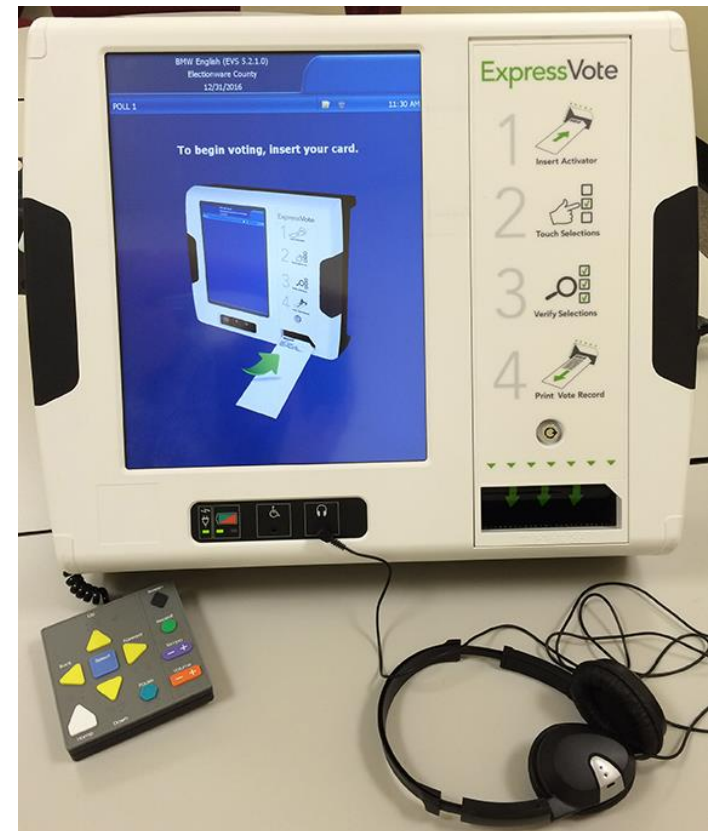
HOW TO VOTE

You can only vote once in each election. Maine offers multiple options to complete your ballot.

- Mail-in absentee ballot
 - You do not need a reason to request a absentee ballot.
- Accessible Electronic Absentee Ballot
 - This allows blind and visually impaired individuals to complete and submit their absentee ballot from an electronic device.
- “Early voting”
 - Starts one month before election day. You can complete your ballot in your Town/City Clerk’s Office.
- In person on election day

ACCESSIBLE VOTING SYSTEM

- The Accessible Voting System is a ballot marking device.
- There are headphones to listen to the ballot. You can make the text bigger on the screen. The provided keypad has braille.
- You do not need to be disabled to use this machine. You will not be asked about your disability. This machine is not connected to the internet.



WHAT PROTECTIONS DO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE WHEN VOTING?

- The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (1984)
 - Requires polling places to be fully accessible to people with disabilities.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
 - The ADA includes all aspects of voting- every step of the voting process must be accessible.
- Help America Vote Act (2002)
 - Requires a ballot marking device at every polling place in the country.
- Title 21:A
 - State laws on elections.

STEPS YOU CAN PROVIDE/RECEIVE ASSISTANCE WITH (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST):

- Reading, marking, submitting, voter registration application
- Reading, marking, returning the ballot
- Pointing on the ballot and show the client where to mark it based on their choice
- Placing the ballot in the scanner machine at the polling station

ACCOMMODATIONS AT POLLING STATIONS:

- Asking for a chair to sit in while waiting in line
- Communicating with election workers with paper/pen or by typing on a electronic device
- Asking a poll worker to read/mark a ballot
- Asking for a space in the voting area with lamps or bright lighting to mark the ballot
- Asking for a quiet area in the voting area to complete ballot
- Using the Accessible Voting System

POLLING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY

- All polling places must be accessible on Election Day.
 - Even polling places like churches, that do not regularly have to comply with the ADA.
- Disability Rights Maine surveys polling places for ADA compliance. In 2023, 79 out of 160 surveyed polling places had accessibility barriers.
 - Since then DRM has trained municipal clerks across the state and offered trainings to poll workers on assisting voters with disabilities.

POLLING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY- BARRIERS OBSERVED IN 2023

- Poorly marked/no marked accessible parking
- No van accessible space
- Broken push button on doors
- Crumbling sidewalks and walkways
- No signs directing to the accessible entrance
- Items in hallways
- Accessible Voting System not setup or functioning

POLLING PLACE BARRIER?

If you encounter a barrier to voting on November 5th, you have options to address it. Remember, you have the right to vote privately and independently—do not leave without casting your ballot.

1. Ask to speak to the polling place warden. Remind them of their obligations under the law.
2. Call DRM's Election Day Hotline at 800-452-1948.
3. Call the Secretary of State Elections Division to report the problem at 207-624-7736.

ACCESSIBILITY BARRIER SCRIPT

Problem: The Accessible Voting System is not setup.

Solution: Ask to speak to the warden. Say, “I want to use the AVS because it’s my right under state and federal law. It needs to be functioning- what are you doing to fix this?”

Problem: Push button on door is broken.

Solution: Ask to speak to the warden. Say, “I noticed the push button on the door is not working. You have to put in place a temporary solution if it’s broken. Can you have someone open the door or prop it open with an object?”

QUESTIONS?

RESOURCES

- [Federal Voting Rights](#)
- [State of Maine Voting Rights](#)
- [Guide for Voters with Cognitive Impairments](#)
- [Maine online voter registration](#)
- [Maine Absentee Ballot request service](#)
- [Find your polling place and town office](#)
- [See your ballot](#)

THANK YOU!
