

## HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT

# Frequently Asked Questions

### What Is HAVA?

HAVA stands for the Help America Vote Act, which is a federal law passed by Congress in 2002 to improve our country's election system. HAVA's main goal is to make the voting process more inclusive and accessible so that more Americans will become registered voters and participate in elections.

### What Does HAVA Do?

HAVA makes voting processes more consistent from state to state. Under HAVA, states now have established standards for voting equipment and voter registration processes. HAVA also aims to educate election workers and the general public about people's voting rights and the process.

### Why Is HAVA Important to People With Disabilities?

One of HAVA's primary goals is to "ensure accessible voting." The law gives specific guidelines about accessibility and accommodations for voters with disabilities. Congress gave money to each state's protection and advocacy agency (P&A) to promote accessible voting, identify and resolve problems, and educate and assist election authorities and people with disabilities.

### What Is the Texas P&A Doing to Help?

Disability Rights Texas has specialists on staff to carry out a wide variety of HAVA-related activities, such as training people with disabilities on voting rights, surveying polling places, working with election officials and educating policymakers. In addition, DRTx runs a special toll-free *Voter Rights Hotline* to answer questions, respond to legal violations and troubleshoot problems.

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Disability Rights  
TEXAS



## A Guide to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Your Right to Vote

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[www.DRTx.org](http://www.DRTx.org)



If you have questions about your voting rights or you need to report a violation, call the Disability Rights Texas *Voter Rights Hotline* at **1-888-796-VOTE** (8683)

or send an e-mail to **vote@DRTx.org**

For more information, visit **www.DRTx.org**



## HAVA and Your Voting Rights

### Voter Registration

People with disabilities have the right to register to vote.

Many people who have limited guardianships still have the right to vote. They have that right unless a judge specifically orders that they cannot vote.

#### Accessibility

State law requires all polling places meet strict accessibility standards.

#### Private Ballot

It is your right to cast a private and independent ballot. Every polling place must have at least one accessible voting device so that individuals with disabilities can cast a private ballot.

#### Voting Assistance

You have the right to assistance – from any person you choose – when registering to vote or when voting if you cannot read or mark the ballot or application. You have the right to an interpreter. It is illegal for the person assisting you to try and influence how you vote.

### Alternative Voting Options

People with disabilities may find it easier to vote by one of the following voting options:

- **Vote by Mail:** You can have your ballot mailed to you. Contact your election official to apply for a ballot by mail. You can apply for a ballot by mail up to sixty (60) days before an election. The last day you can request a ballot by mail is seven (7) days before an election.
- **Early Voting:** You can vote early in person. During early voting, you can vote at any polling place in your county. Early voting begins seventeen (17) days before an election and ends four (4) days before an election.
- **Curbside Voting:** If you are physically unable to enter a polling place or to stand in line to vote, you can ask an election official to bring your ballot to your vehicle or to the entrance of the polling place. This applies to both early voting and Election Day.

### Learn More About HAVA

**Disability Rights Texas** - [www.DRTx.org/resources/voting-rights](http://www.DRTx.org/resources/voting-rights)

**DisabilityInfo.gov** - [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov) (See Civil Rights/Accessibility Guidelines)

**U.S. Elections Assistance Commission** - [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov) (see Voting Accessibility)

**U.S. Department of Justice** - [www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/hava/hava.php](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/hava/hava.php)

**Texas Secretary of State** - [www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/index.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/index.shtml)

**American Association of People with Disabilities** - [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com) (see Disability Vote Project)

ONLINE  
RESOURCES