



For Immediate Release:

**Barriers to Voting For People with Disabilities and Proposed Solutions:
Focus Group Project July 2020**

Disability Rights Vermont (DRVT) and Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos are pleased to make public the voices of people with disabilities identifying the barriers to voting they face and ideas of what can be done to overcome those barriers.

DRVT and the SOS have a long-standing history of collaboration to ensure that every person in Vermont is able to exercise their right to vote. With funding from the Help America Vote Act, this past year our offices engaged in an innovative project to identify and address barriers to voting for Vermonters with disabilities: hosting and facilitating 10 focus groups throughout the state to solicit first person experiences and input about barriers to voting and proposed solutions to eliminate those barriers. Over 120 individuals with disabilities from diverse backgrounds, along with allies and caregivers, participated in the focus groups.

“We will continue to do everything we can to remove barriers to registration and voting for all Vermont voters, including those with disabilities who face greater challenges to exercise their right to vote,” said Secretary Condos. “I thank those who voiced their input in this process, and DRVT for their important partnership.”

Through these focus groups, we learned that many voters with disabilities have, and continue to experience barriers to voting. These barriers include:

- difficulties with accessibility, both physically at polling places (most commonly cited was the lack of available accessible parking and long lines waiting to vote without seating), and visual or auditory barriers;
- the voting process itself being intimidating and hard to understand;
- a lack of knowledge about the different ways allowed in Vermont to cast one’s ballot and about the availability of accessible voting options;

- difficulties accessing and understanding information about how and where to vote;
- challenges in getting reliable information about candidates running for office; and
- a lack of available transportation to the polls.

Overall, the theme expressed by focus group participants for solutions was one of increasing voter education, accessible information, inclusion, accommodation, and transportation so that voters with disabilities have the same opportunity to vote as all other voters.

More details may be found in the complete report, available here:

<http://www.disabilityrightsvt.org/pdfs/Barriers-to-Voting-and-Proposed-Solutions.pdf>

DRVT and the SOS are excited to continue this important work together on behalf of Vermonters with disabilities and to implement solutions, now and in the future, to ensure equal access to the electoral process.

For questions, comments, voting information, or assistance please contact:

Disability Rights Vermont at 1-800-834-7890

or email info@disabilityrightsvt.org

Vermont Secretary of State's Office at 1-800-439-VOTE (8683)

or visit:

<https://mvp.vermont.gov/>

<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/>

Please remember to register and vote in the upcoming elections

Vermont Primary Election: August 11, 2020

Vermont General Election: November 3, 2020

You may vote early from home or at your town/city clerk's office before the elections, or in person at your polling place on Election Day

Your Vote is Your Voice!