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# Voting Rights For Americans With Disabilities

In 2012, 30 percent of voters with disabilities reported difficulty casting their vote.

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According to the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), there are over 35 million eligible voters with disabilities in 2016, and countless others that consider issues of disability rights when casting their votes. Education, the economy, health care, and infrastructure are important to many of us, but these issues take on particular relevance for Americans with disabilities. With the election less than one week away, it's important to remember that, for a large number of people in our society, voting is not an easy process in many ways.

Voters with disabilities still face physical barriers to voting, whether that is in the form of inaccessible facilities, voting equipment, or ballots. In 2012, 30 percent of voters with disabilities reported difficulty casting their vote compared to only 8 percent of voters without disabilities (Rutgers University). Voters with disabilities should not have to overcome physical obstacles to cast their vote. Polling locations that do not make physical accommodations not only prevent voters from making their voice heard but can make voters feel like their opinion is less valuable. Accommodations, like the "curb-side voting" implemented at some locations, can help alleviate physical access issues.

Getting accurate information on disability policies can also be difficult for voters. Candidates often do not directly address issues that are important to voters with disabilities and their families. The rights and protections of people with disabilities, the expansion of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and health care issues for people with disabilities are not topics that are typically mentioned on the campaign trail.

While the disability community has achieved some legislative victories, there is still a long way to go in making sure people with disabilities have the supports and services they need to live independently and contribute fully to society. Just this session, the Supreme Court is hearing a case regarding support animals and the ADA. When candidates are silent on the issues that matter to any block of voters, it's hard for those voters to know who has their best interests in mind. With over 35 million eligible voters

with disabilities, candidates should not ignore disability issues. It's important that officials are asked to address these concerns.

AAPD, in partnership with the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), issued a REV UP Presidential Candidate Questionnaire to all of the presidential candidates on more than 20 state ballots. To date, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump responded to the survey. AAPD compiled a comparison of their responses.

The issue of mental competence and voting is one that varies by state, and guidelines are applied unevenly across the country. A voter in one state may be completely ineligible to vote based on the fact that they have a guardian in place to handle their affairs, while that same voter may have full rights and privileges in another state. In some cases, people with disabilities have to submit to tests that single them out and cause unnecessary burden. The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law has released a voter guide for individuals with mental disabilities – it can be accessed [here](#). We need to have a national standard under the Voting Rights Act to determine these guidelines and to make sure voters are not intimidated out of their rights to cast a ballot, and that the eligibility of voters is handled in a respectful and inclusive way.

Our elected officials need to not only be aware of the problems that voters with disabilities face, but also actively engage these voters and discuss their legislative plans for protecting the rights of this population. It's important that the voices of voters with disabilities are heard. AAPD has launched the REV UP Campaign to increase the political power of the disability community while also engaging candidates and the media on disability issues. REV UP stands for Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power! For more information, please visit the AAPD website at [www.aapd.com/REVUP](http://www.aapd.com/REVUP).

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