



## Understanding Voting Rights and Current Threats to Access for the Disability Community

### What Is Happening Right Now?

Voting is a fundamental right and an essential part of full participation in community life. For people with disabilities, the right to vote privately and independently is protected under federal law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as Massachusetts election law.

However, new federal proposals and ongoing changes to voting policies across the country are raising concerns about whether voting will remain *truly* accessible. One of the most significant and concerning proposals is the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which would require documentary proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

Massachusetts has made important progress in expanding voting access in recent years, including permanent vote-by-mail, early voting, and requirements for accessible polling locations. However, federal policy changes can still affect voters in Massachusetts by introducing new requirements that would make it harder to cast a ballot.

### Voting Rights for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have the same legal right to vote as any other eligible citizen. Federal and state laws require that voting be accessible, meaning individuals must be able to vote privately and independently.

In Massachusetts, polling places are required to be accessible and equipped with accessible voting machines. Voters may choose to vote by mail, vote early, or vote in person on Election Day. For many people with disabilities, vote-by-mail is a critical tool for maintaining independence.

Accessible voting also includes access to clear and understandable information. Many voting materials are not written in plain language, which can create barriers for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism. Voters who need assistance have the right to receive help from a person they choose or from a poll worker. Voters with IDD and autism who need assistance can rely on family members, direct support professionals (DSPs), and other staff to support them at the polls if they choose.

If barriers arise, voters have the right to request accommodations and report issues through Disability Law Center's [polling compliance survey](#). Read more about accessible voting [here](#).



## Current Threats to Voting Access

Changes to voting policy that have been proposed by the Trump administration could make it harder for people with disabilities to exercise these rights.

The SAVE Act would require documentation of citizenship to register to vote, creating new administrative barriers for individuals who may have difficulty accessing or providing official documents. This bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives in April of 2026 and is currently being considered by the U.S. Senate.

Increasing documentation requirements and changes to voting systems, such as restrictions on voting by mail and more complex registration processes, can make participation more difficult. These changes have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities, who may rely on accessible systems, clear information, and flexible voting options.

Even “small” changes can limit independence and reduce access to the voting process.

## The Bottom Line

People with disabilities have a protected right to vote, but that right must be accessible in practice. Policies such as the SAVE Act raise concerns about whether voting will remain accessible and inclusive.

Massachusetts has made strong progress, but continued advocacy is needed to protect and maintain accessible voting at the federal level.

## What Can I Do?

Staying informed and speaking up is critical as harmful voting policies are being proposed. Sharing your experiences and contacting your elected officials can help protect accessible voting.

- **Take action now** and tell Congress to protect voting rights for people with disabilities: <https://act.thearc.org/campaign/158054/>
- Visit The Arc of the United States’ Election Center to prepare for and learn more about this year’s elections: <https://act.thearc.org/campaign/156092/>
- Bookmark The Arc of Massachusetts’ Voter Resource Center, which we’ll be updating throughout the midterm season: <https://thearcofmass.org/voting/>
- Visit REV UP Massachusetts for more information regarding voting accessibility and for more resources: <https://revupma.org/>