

# Celebrating All Abilities Virginia



**SUMMER/FALL 2020**

## Voting in Virginia Could Have Been So Simple and Safe~

I have written and rewritten this opening article a dozen times in the past few weeks. I applied online for my ballot in mid-August and had every intention of encouraging everyone to do the same.... but recent actions in the news have caused me to rethink my actions.

If you have been waiting for your mail or medications, or are just following the news, you are probably aware of the slowing down of the postal service. This observation is in no way meant to fault the postal workers, who are essential workers and have been doing heroic work in this pandemic.

We can debate about whether it is being done deliberately by the newly installed Postmaster General. As described by Wikipedia, "Louis DeJoy is an American businessman and Republican Party fundraiser. He was appointed in May 2020 by the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service to serve as the 75th United States Postmaster General and chief executive officer." ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_DeJoy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_DeJoy))

Regardless of how and why it is being done, we, as voters, now need to take additional precautions to make sure our votes are counted!

You will notice that this newsletter has updated information from previous editions. I've also tried to approach the situation from several different angles so that what you read may seem

redundant. What follows in the next few pages is my attempt at clarification. Even so, it's important that you do a bit of research yourself to stay abreast of what's happening. Stay safe - **VOTE!**

*Laura Nelson*, Editor

### TO DO LIST - MAKE A PLAN

- FILL OUT THE CENSUS IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY** (page 4)
- CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS (ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVEN'T VOTED FOR SEVERAL YEARS)** (page 7)
- VERIFY YOUR POLLING PLACE.** (page 6)
- FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH NEW VOTING ID REQUIREMENTS.** (page 8)
- CONSIDER REQUESTING A MAIL-IN BALLOT AND/OR CONSIDER VOTING EARLY IN PERSON.** (page 6, 7)

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# Hallowheels Costume Contest and Fundraiser

## Call for Participants!

<https://hr.atdevicesforkids.org/events-page/hallowheels-costume-contest/>

Hallowheels: a Halloween costume contest which turns wheelchairs into assets. Enter the contest, raise much needed operating funds for CATS, have fun, be famous and earn a prize!

This is a fundraiser for Children’s Assistive Technology Service (CATS) which in past years, provided volunteer teams competing by creating dream-come-true Halloween costumes for children, ages 4-26 who depend on wheelchair mobility. This year, due to Covid-19, we will be doing it a bit differently! We are looking for families and children across Virginia to participate. This year, families will create a costume for their child, supplied with a framing kit, and virtual help from CATS and our wonderful volunteer partners. Funds are raised by having the public vote for their favorite costume with dollars. Prizes will be awarded for costumes raising the most funds and for special design categories. Please read the following carefully before signing up:

**Upon completing and submitting the online Hallowheels Participant Application, the child’s parent or legal guardian agrees to the following:**

1. Family will create a costume for their child– CATS will supply a starter “kit” to create the frame for the costume and virtual help with the process as needed.
2. Photo and video release- Family will provide a photo of their child in the costume they created. Family members may be included in the photo,



which will be posted on the CATS website and may be utilized on Facebook and other social media, as well as news media/sponsor websites as part of the Hallowheels fundraiser. No personal information will be published. The child’s costume name and city/town of origin will be the only identifier.

3. Photos will be due to CATS on October 24, 2020 by midnight. Photos received after the due date will not be featured on the CATS website or eligible for prizes.



**CHILDREN’S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE**  
*Children’s Assistive Technology Service (CATS) provides for the re-use of pediatric rehabilitation equipment and assistive technology devices in Virginia. CATS serves as a no-cost resource for children with disabilities who need adaptive equipment and whose families have limited resources. <https://hr.atdevicesforkids.org>*



~ FOUND ON FACEBOOK ~



The disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV) will virtually host our first ever disAbility Rights and Resources Expo on Wednesday September 16, 2020 from 10 am - 5 pm.

The expo's theme of Breaking Barriers, Creating Access, is a tribute to the 30 years of protection that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has provided for countless millions of people with disabilities in the United States.

Learn more at [www.dlcv.org/expo](http://www.dlcv.org/expo)

OCTOBER 31, 2020 - The Best Buddies Friendship Walk is going VIRTUAL!

Join us on Saturday, October 31, as thousands of Virtual Walkers from around the nation walk for inclusion and acceptance. The Best Buddies Virtual Friendship Walk is a chance for you and your closest friends, family and co-workers to join us online as we celebrate our fundraising efforts to sustain and grow our programs locally.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

- 1.) Register for the Virtual Walk in your area at: [BestBuddiesFriendshipWalk.org](http://BestBuddiesFriendshipWalk.org)
- 2.) Start fundraising! Set a goal and tell the world why you're walking & raising money for Best Buddies!
- 3.) On October 31, tune in to your area's opening ceremonies on their state's Facebook page (Info coming soon!)
- 4.) Directly after opening ceremonies at 11:00am, tune into the Fall Virtual Friendship Walk on the Best Buddies Friendship Walk Facebook and Instagram pages

The Best Buddies Friendship Walk



- 5.) Share with the world an image/video of your Walk For Inclusion on Facebook/Instagram on October 31 using #MyWalkForInclusion and celebrate our collective fundraising efforts!

REGISTER at [www.bestbuddiesfriendshipwalk.org/virginia-dc](http://www.bestbuddiesfriendshipwalk.org/virginia-dc)



Look for the next issue of Celebrating All Abilities to be posted during the fall/winter of 2020.

Send story ideas, interesting links, and events to

Laura Nelson, Editor at [CelebratingAllAbilities@gmail.com](mailto:CelebratingAllAbilities@gmail.com)

THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING US ON FACEBOOK





# Census 2020

## You Count! Be Counted.

### It's not too late!

The 2020 Census is here, and it is important that people with disabilities and their families are ready to be counted! Every 10 years, everyone in the United States is counted through the census. It is important that everyone is counted because the census data impacts many key things. For example, the census data is used to figure out how much money state and local governments get for Medicaid, housing vouchers, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and education programs. When there isn't enough money, services and programs for people with disabilities can be cut. Census data is also used to determine how many representatives each state gets in the House of Representatives. Even with many self-isolating, it's easy to complete. It takes just a few minutes to fill out and can be done safely right in the comfort of your home.

Check out the resources from The Arc to make sure you and your community are ready to be counted! ■

To access the Census online, visit  
<https://my2020census.gov>

*The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Visit <https://thearc.org>*

## Resources From The Arc

The Arc has developed resources to support individuals and organizations in understanding what the census is, why its important for people with disabilities, and how to complete it. To review these documents, visit <https://thearc.org/census/>

- **You Count! Be Counted.**

Plain language, English (PDF)  
Plain language, English (Word Doc)

- **Tu Cuentas! Se Contado.**

Plain language, Spanish (PDF)  
Plain language, Spanish (Word Doc)

- **Get Your Community Counted: A Guide for Organizations**

English (PDF) | English (Word Doc)

- **Haga Que Su Comunidad Sea Contada: Una Guía Para Organizaciones**

Spanish (PDF) | Spanish (Word Doc)

- **How Are Group Homes Being Counted in the Census?**

Census Group Home Fact Sheet (PDF) | Census Group Home Fact Sheet (Word Doc)

## Other Resources

Provided by

- National Disability Rights Network – [www.ndrn.org](http://www.ndrn.org)
- The Arc – <https://thearc.org>
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities – [www.nacdd.org](http://www.nacdd.org)

- **Why the Census Matters for People With Disabilities: A Guide to the 2020 Census Operations & Challenges – National Disability Rights Network**

[www.ndrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/People-with-Disabilities-Brief.pdf](http://www.ndrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/People-with-Disabilities-Brief.pdf)

- **What's at stake in the 2020 Census?**

<https://censuscounts.org>

- **Webinar: The Census & The Disability Community: Census 101**

[www.ndrn.org/resource/census-2020-get-out-the-count/](http://www.ndrn.org/resource/census-2020-get-out-the-count/)

- **Webinar: The 2020 Census Disability Count Continues**

[www.ndrn.org/resource/2020-census-disability-count-continues/](http://www.ndrn.org/resource/2020-census-disability-count-continues/)

- **The 2020 Census Disability Count Continues Questions and Answers**

<http://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-2020-Census-Disability-County-Continues-QA-FINAL.pdf>

**Note: If links don't work from this document, copy them into your browser.**

# Census Bureau Adapts Operations to Ensure Everyone Is Counted

**New  
Closing Date  
September 30,  
2020**

**AUGUST 14, 2020**  
**RELEASE NUMBER CB20-CN.94—**

As the U.S. Census Bureau continues to monitor the impacts COVID-19 has on 2020 Census operations, changes to operations are being deployed to ensure the safety of staff and the public while maximizing the number of households that respond on their own to the 2020 Census.

"We are taking steps and adapting our operations to make sure everyone is counted, while keeping everyone safe," said Census Bureau Director Dr. Steven Dillingham. "Our commitment to a complete and accurate 2020 Census is absolute. In this challenging environment, we are deploying these tactics to make sure we reach every household in every community. If you haven't responded, the time to respond is now! Responding to the 2020 Census online, on paper, by phone, or in person with a census taker, helps secure vital resources for your community."

As of today, over 63.5% of households have responded to the 2020 Census. People can still respond online, over the phone or by mail — all without having to meet a census taker.

## **The Census Bureau will follow up with some nonresponding households by phone.**

In order to supplement our capabilities to send census takers to households in person, the Census Bureau is training census takers to follow up with households by phone. Using information provided to the Census Bureau and third-party purchased data, the Census Bureau has a strong contact list for both landlines and cellphones assigned to houses on the Census Bureau's address list. These phone calls will enable the Census Bureau to have maximum flexibility for

conducting field operations, and is one more method that census takers can use to reach nonresponding households. If a voicemail is available, the census taker will leave a message asking the household to call one of the Census Bureau's call centers.

Census takers have begun following up with households nationwide. Census takers will continue to follow up with nonresponding households in person, and will follow CDC and local public health guidelines when they visit.

If no one is home when the census taker visits, the census taker will leave a "Notice of Visit" with information about how to respond online, by phone or by mail, to encourage response. During Census Bureau tests, the "Notice of Visit" proved successful in encouraging people to respond on their own to the census.

## **The Census Bureau will mail an additional paper questionnaire to nonresponding households.**

To encourage more households to respond on their own to the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau is contacting nonresponding households by mailing an additional paper questionnaire to some households that have yet to respond.

The Census Bureau is sending a seventh mailing, including a paper questionnaire, in late August to early September to the lowest-responding census tracts.

## **The Census Bureau is emailing households in low-responding areas.**

The Census Bureau recently announced that households in low-responding areas would be receiving emails to encourage response to the 2020 Census.

The emails will go to all households that the Census Bureau has contact information for in census block groups with a response rate lower than 50%. This will include households who may have already responded. In total, the Census Bureau expects to email more than 20 million households in these low-responding areas. The email messages will come from 2020census@subscriptions.census.gov and will give recipients the option to opt out of receiving future messages.

The Census Bureau is using email addresses that households have provided in response to another Census Bureau program, or received from states (such as from their WIC, SNAP or TANF programs) or from a commercial list.

In addition to contacting households through these new methods, the Census Bureau is increasing other outreach efforts during one last push to encourage everyone to respond to the census online, by phone or by mail. The Census Bureau recently announced that it has launched Mobile Questionnaire Assistance, a program that offers assistance with responding at locations, such as grocery stores and pharmacies, in low-responding areas.

Additionally, the Census Bureau has expanded its paid advertising, launching a series of new advertisements aimed at increasing online response. Now, 45 non-English languages are receiving some level of paid media support

###

**Contact  
Public Information Office  
301-763-3030  
pio@census.gov**

### **Editor's note:**

*The census will stop September 30, one month sooner than the originally indicated date of October 31. According to NPR, "These last-minute changes to the constitutionally mandated count of every person living in the U.S. threaten the accuracy of population numbers used to determine the distribution of political representation and federal funding for the next decade."\**

\* [www.npr.org/2020/08/03/898548910/census-cut-short-a-month-rushes-to-finish-all-counting-efforts-by-sept-30](http://www.npr.org/2020/08/03/898548910/census-cut-short-a-month-rushes-to-finish-all-counting-efforts-by-sept-30)



# 5 Voting FAQs

*I attended a Zoom meeting about Early and Absentee Voting. Here are the main take aways.*

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**Q** When can I expect my absentee ballot to be mailed out?

**A** *If you applied for an Absentee Ballot, ballots will begin to be mailed out on September 18.*

**Q** How can I track my ballot?

**A** *After applying, you can check to see if your absentee application was received, and whether your ballot was sent and received by going to our Citizen Portal.*  
**[www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal)**

**Q** If I requested an absentee ballot but want to vote in person, what do I do?

**A** *You need to take your UNOPENED ballot in the the envelope with you to your registrar's office in order to be able to vote in person. This starts 45 days before the election and ends on the Saturday before the election. Check with your local registrar to verify business hours.*  
*~ Updated in 2019 ~*

**[www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formwarehouse/absentee-voting/ballots/ELECT-706.4-AB-Instructions-for-Voting-an-Absentee-Ballot\\_2-20.pdf](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formwarehouse/absentee-voting/ballots/ELECT-706.4-AB-Instructions-for-Voting-an-Absentee-Ballot_2-20.pdf)**

**Q** Do I need an ID to vote in person?

**A** *People who vote absentee in person or at their polling place on election day must present an ID. No longer must be photo ID but they must have one of the IDs listed on ELECT website. (See also page 9 of this document). More in person voting information can be found at*  
**[www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/in-person-voting/](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/in-person-voting/)**

**Q** Where is my closest polling location?

**A** *You can find your local location by checking out <https://iwillvote.com/> . This will continue to be updated up until Absentee in Person voting starts in September.*

**Virginia state website for all these FAQs and more**  
**[www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/)**  
**DPVA hotline at (844-4VA-VOTE • 844-482-8683)**

# Voting Tips and Tidbits

## Early Voting In Person

Starting 45 days before Election Day, visit your local registrar's office or a satellite voting location in your county or city to vote early. Remember, the Saturday before Election Day is the last day to vote early.

You do not have to have a reason or fill out an application to vote early.

At the registrar's office or satellite voting location, you must provide your name and address and show an acceptable form of ID or sign an ID Confirmation Statement. See page 8. If acceptable identification is not provided, you must sign an ID Confirmation Statement or a provisional ballot will be offered and you are allowed until the Friday at noon following the election to provide a copy of acceptable identification to the electoral board or sign an ID Confirmation Statement. Provisional voters receive a notice to remind them of the deadline and right to attend the electoral board meeting.

Accessible equipment and/or curbside voting is available upon request.

[www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/)



## VERIFY: Are Absentee Voting Applications Arriving The Mail Legit?

RICHMOND, Va. — You might have gotten a letter in your mailbox recently from the Center for Voter Information. Included in the letter is an application to register to vote by mail in Virginia. Is it legitimate?

While election officials confirm the applications themselves are indeed legitimate, it is from a non-government affiliated organization. And to make matters even more complicated, the included return envelope for hundreds of thousands of these applications directed residents to an incorrect mailing address.

The group behind the letters, The Center for Voter Information, which describes itself as non-partisan and nonprofit, has apologized in a news release, blaming the incorrect mailers to a printing error made by Smith-Edwards-Dunlap Company, which prepared the envelopes.

The Virginia Department of Elections said it will immediately forward any

such applications to the correct election offices for processing. Elections officials say any voter wanting an absentee ballot should apply online through the state's website.

*Excerpted with thanks from*  
[www.13newsnow.com/article/news/politics/elections/virginians-get-mail-in-ballot-letters-with-wrong-information/291-4ff341bf-c1ce-4969-94b8-ad62a6ee9b5b](http://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/politics/elections/virginians-get-mail-in-ballot-letters-with-wrong-information/291-4ff341bf-c1ce-4969-94b8-ad62a6ee9b5b)

*Author: Christopher Collette  
Published: 1:49 PM EDT August 7, 2020  
Updated: 4:47 PM EDT August 10, 2020*



## Election Protection Basics when

### Voting in Person on Election Day

Keep your place in line. The lines may be long, but as long as you are in line when the polls close, you will be allowed to cast your ballot. If you leave the line, you may not be able to vote. Do everything you can to vote a regular ballot. Cast a provisional ballot only if you have no other option. In many states if you cast a provisional ballot at the wrong polling location it will not be counted.

*If you experience any of the following, report it to Election Protection (866-687-8683) immediately:*

- Harassment (including harassing questions about your qualifications to vote.

- False information about voting requirements.
- People impersonating poll workers or election officials
- If you are told you are not on the voter roll: Confirm that you are registered to vote. Confirm that you are at the right polling place. If you registered and are not showing up on the voter roll, call the Election Protection Hotline (866-687-8683).

- Did you recently move? If so and you didn't update your registration, you are likely on the voter roll of your old polling place.

- If you are being turned away from voting for not having the proper ID: Ask for written instructions about what you must do to ensure the provisional ballot will be counted. Ask for a phone number you can call to confirm if your vote was counted.

For more information visit <https://866ourvote.org>



★ VIRGINIA ★  
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

Everything you need to know to vote in Virginia  
[www.elections.virginia.gov/index.html](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/index.html)



***How and where can I register to vote?***

If at all possible, register online at  
[www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/)

- Any person, regardless of their disability status, also has the right to register to vote at any office or agency that provides such a service. These offices include
- Local voter registration office
  - State or local government offices when applying or re-certifying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, or Rehabilitation Services.
  - Government offices in the State that provide State-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to person with disabilities
  - Armed forces recruitment offices
  - Public libraries
  - Virginia Department of Elections office
  - Department of Motor Vehicles offices
  - Voter Registration Drives



***You will need to show one acceptable form of identification whenever you vote in person. This is Virginia law for all voters as of July 1, 2020.***

Photo ID requirement has been removed: However, a voter must show documentation, such as a

- voter registration confirmation document,
- valid Virginia driver's license,
- valid United States passport,
- copy of a current utility bill,
- bank statement,
- government check,
- paycheck and other acceptable documents.



***Accessibility***

***Is curbside voting still available for those who wish to use it?***

Yes, curbside voting is still available for people ages 65 and older, or any person with a physical disability. The voter shall be afforded every opportunity to vote in a private and independent fashion, but voting equipment must remain in the view of the election officers.

***Will I be able to get into the polling place on my own?***

Federal and state laws mandate that all polling places, including all locations for in-person absentee voting, must be fully accessible to elderly voters and voters with disabilities; state law further requires curbside voting be available at all these locations for voters age 65 or over or with physical disabilities. See above discussion of curbside voting.

Voters with continuing disabilities may apply annually to receive absentee ballots for all elections within a given year using the Annual Absentee Ballot Application.

***Is the voting equipment in my polling place going to be accessible?***

State law and federal law (the Help America Vote Act) require every polling location in Virginia must be equipped with at least one accessible voting system that will allow all voters with a disability to vote the same private and independent manner as a voter without a disability.

***I understand that with the changes in elections services I should not need assistance from anyone, but can I still have assistance if I wish to?***

Yes, you can. If any voter who requires assistance in voting due to a physical disability or inability to read or write can receive assistance if they request it. Any of the officers of election can advise you of your rights in this area.

## ***Are people with cognitive disabilities allowed to register and vote?***

Yes. A registered voter with cognitive disabilities can be eligible to vote if not adjudicated mentally incapacitated by a court of law.

## ***What if I feel that my rights to accessible registration and voting have been violated?***

Contact your local voter registration office:

<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup>

Contact the Virginia Department of Elections at (800) 552-9745 or [info@elections.virginia.gov](mailto:info@elections.virginia.gov)

TTY Phone Access for Hearing Impaired: Contact Virginia Relay Service at 711 and ask them to call the Virginia Department of Elections at (800) 552-9745

Submit your complaint:

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/voter-complaints/>

Email: [info@elections.virginia.gov](mailto:info@elections.virginia.gov)

## **Additional Resources**

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### **• *The Americans with Disabilities Act and Other Federal Laws ~ Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities***

Posted on U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division – Disability Rights Section  
[www.ada.gov/ada\\_voting/ada\\_voting\\_ta.htm](http://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm)

### **• *Resources for Voters with Disabilities***

Page on U.S. Election Assistance Commission with many relevant resources, both statewide and national.  
<https://www.eac.gov/voters/resources-for-voters-with-disabilities>

### **• *ADA Checklist for Polling Places***

This document is an updated technical assistance publication on polling place accessibility for voters with disabilities. The publication includes information about key areas of a facility that must be accessible to voters with mobility or vision disabilities, options for low-cost temporary measures for removing barriers, and a survey to guide election officials in evaluating the accessibility of facilities used or being considered for use as polling places.  
[www.ada.gov/votingck.htm](http://www.ada.gov/votingck.htm)



# **VOTE SMART**

## **JUST THE FACTS**

*Vote Smart's mission is to provide free, factual, unbiased information on candidates and elected officials to ALL Americans.*  
<https://votesmart.org>

### ***The Voter's Self-Defense System (Partial list)***

Every candidate and elected official from President to local government can be easily and instantly accessed through the Voter's Self-Defense System:



#### **Voting Records – [https://votesmart.org/bills#.WezgrBR\\_Jno](https://votesmart.org/bills#.WezgrBR_Jno)**

Vote Smart digests key legislation in Congress and all 50 states into easy-to-understand summaries, making it easy to compare what your representatives said during the campaign with how they actually voted on the record.



#### **Biographical & Contact Information – [https://votesmart.org/search#.Wezh9BR\\_Jno](https://votesmart.org/search#.Wezh9BR_Jno)**

From their previous professions, education, family life, and organizational memberships to their social media accounts and latest email addresses.



#### **Issue Positions (Political Courage Test) – [https://votesmart.org/about/political-courage-test#.WeziPhR\\_Jno](https://votesmart.org/about/political-courage-test#.WeziPhR_Jno)**

We test thousands of candidates for President, Congress, Governor and State Legislature with our Political Courage Test. The Test accurately measures candidates' willingness to provide voters with their positions on the issues they will most likely face if elected.



#### **Interest Group Ratings – <https://votesmart.org/interest-groups>**

See how over 400 national and 1300 state special interest groups evaluate your representatives. Despite their bias, special interest group ratings can help indicate where an incumbent has stood on a particular set of issues.



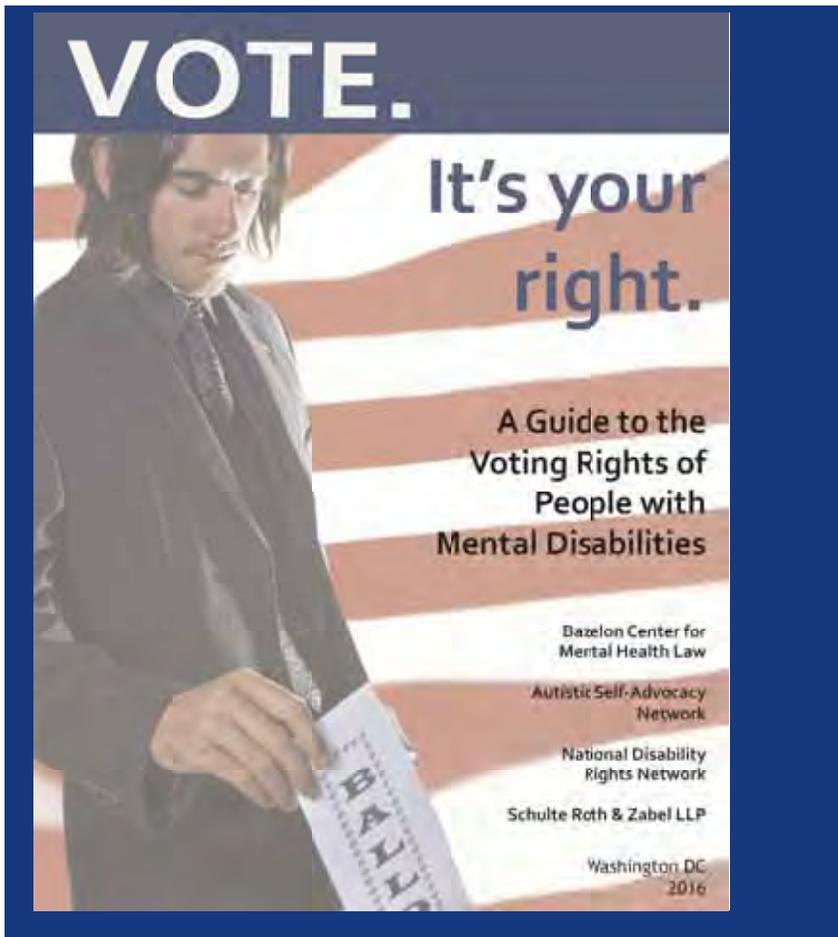
#### **Campaign Finances – [https://votesmart.org/search#.WezjRRR\\_Jno](https://votesmart.org/search#.WezjRRR_Jno)**

How much money did your representatives raise and from whom?

<https://votesmart.org>

The guide is available for download via [www.bazelon.org/issues/voting](http://www.bazelon.org/issues/voting).

Print copies are available from the Bazelon Center;  
inquiries to [pubs@bazelon.org](mailto:pubs@bazelon.org) or (202) 467-5730 ext 1311



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**Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, National Disability Rights Network, and Schulte, Roth & Zabel LLP, VOTE. It's Your Right: A Guide to the Voting Rights of People with Mental Disabilities; Washington DC and New York, NY 2018.**

The guide was written by Bazelon Center Director of Policy and Legal Advocacy Jennifer Mathis and Senior Staff Attorney Lewis Bossing; Autistic Self-Advocacy Network Legal Director & Director of Public Policy Samantha Crane and Policy Analyst Kelly Israel; National Disability Rights Network Disability Advocacy Specialist for Voting Rights Michelle Bishop; and attorneys from the law firm Schulte, Roth & Zabel LLP, including Craig Stein, Joseph Suh, Boris Ziser, Alexander J. Buonocore, Atul Joshi, Sean D. Locklear, Richard Mertl, S. Beverly Prewitt, Wayne Teigman, Jacob B. Wentworth, and Ashley S. Whang, with assistance from Daniel L. Greenberg and Joseph Soileau.



# Governor Northam Signs Sweeping New Laws to Expand Access to Voting

## Legislation expands early voting, makes Election Day a state holiday

**RICHMOND—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • April 12, 2020**

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam has signed landmark new laws to repeal Virginia’s voter ID law, make Election Day a state holiday in Virginia, and expand access to early voting.

*“Voting is a fundamental right, and these new laws strengthen our democracy by making it easier to cast a ballot, not harder,” said Governor Northam. “No matter who you are or where you live in Virginia, your voice deserves to be heard. I’m proud to sign these bills into law.”*

Governor Northam signed these bills:

- **House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 111**, sponsored by House Majority Leader Charniele Herring and Senator Janet Howell, respectively, allow early voting 45 days prior to an election without a stated excuse. *[Before July 1, 2020] requires voters who wish to vote absentee to provide the state with a reason, from an approved list, why they are unable to vote on Election Day.*
- **House Bill 19 and Senate Bill 65**, sponsored by Delegate Joe Lindsey and Senator Mamie Locke, respectively, remove the requirement that voters show

a photo ID prior to casting a ballot. Voter ID laws disenfranchise individuals who may not have access to photo identification, and disproportionately impact low-income individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

• **House Bill 108 and Senate Bill 601**, sponsored by Delegate Joe Lindsey and Senator Louise Lucas, respectively, make Election Day a state holiday, which will help ensure every Virginian has the time and opportunity to cast their ballot. In order to maintain the same number of state holidays, this measure repeals the current Lee-Jackson Day holiday, established over 100 years ago to honor Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

• **House Bill 235 and Senate Bill 219**, sponsored by Delegate Joshua Cole and Senator David Marsden, respectively, implement automatic voter registration for individuals accessing service at a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office or the DMV website.

• **House Bill 238 and House Bill 239**, sponsored by Delegate Mark Sickles, and Senate Bill 455, sponsored by Senator Bryce Reeves, expand absentee voting timelines to ensure access to the polls.

• **House Bill 1678**, sponsored by Delegate Joe Lindsey, extends in-person polling hours from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

“We need more access to the ballot box, not less,” said Senator Louise Lucas. “I am so proud to be a part of new laws that expand access to voting and make our Commonwealth more representative of the people we serve. Today is an historic day.”

“Our democracy relies on equal access to the ballot box,” said House Majority Leader Charniele Herring. “I’m grateful to the Governor for his partnership in breaking down barriers to voting, and ensuring all Virginians have the opportunity to exercise this fundamental right.”

“Virginia’s photo ID law was designed to make it more difficult to vote,” said Delegate Joe Lindsey. “It is past time we repealed this law, and I’m grateful to the Governor for helping us get it done.”

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The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

## ***DREDF Mourns the Passing of Civil Rights Leader Congressman John Lewis***

**W**e honor Mr. Lewis' lifelong commitment to fighting injustice and working towards his vision for a Beloved Community.

In 2015, DREDF established the John R. Lewis Intersectionality Award. Mr. Lewis was an icon of the civil rights movement who continually recognized that the interconnected nature of identities such as disability, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. In speaking up against an amendment to the ADA that proposed to bar people with HIV from working in the food industry and that threatened to gut the ADA, Mr. Lewis stated "Listen to the health experts, not the hate experts, not the fear experts. Discrimination was wrong in 1964, discrimination was wrong in 1965, discrimination was wrong in 1968 and discrimination is wrong now."

Mr. Lewis always understood that disability rights are civil rights. In 2015, he strongly opposed H.R. 620, which would have weakened the civil rights of people with disabilities, making it harder for us to use the same restrooms, shop at the same stores, and eat at the same restaurants as our non-disabled friends, family members, and peers.

His remarks echoed what he always knew to be true:

*"Many of my colleagues may not remember when the Civil Rights Act became the law of the land in 1964, but I remember. I was there. As a matter of fact, I gave a little blood during the sit-ins, during the Freedom Rides. I remember the struggle, the fight, and the sacrifice of so many to protect the dignity and the worth of every human being. I was here serving in this very Chamber when the Americans with Disabilities Act became the law of the land 26 years later. Yet today, it is unbelievable; it is unreal; we are considering a bill that turns the clock backwards and strikes a devastating blow in the fight for civil rights. Mr.*



*Chair, I want to make it crystal clear for the record: there is no place in our country for the burden to be placed on those whose rights have and will be violated time and time again. Mr. Chair, this bill is wrong, it is mean-spirited, and it is a shame and a disgrace that we would bring it to the floor. I urge each and every one of my colleagues to oppose this bill."*

***Thank you, Congressman Lewis.  
Rest in Power.***

***The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), founded in 1979, is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities.***

***<https://dredf.org>***