



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

GREB Handbook

Chapter 16

Accessibility

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16. Accessibility

Every qualified voter has the right to vote, regardless of whether he or she has a mental or physical disability or limited English proficiency. All citizens of voting age are considered mentally competent unless a court has declared them incapacitated. This chapter is designed to help electoral board members and general registrars ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for these voters in both the registrar's office and at the polling places.

16.1 LEGAL BASIS

The following laws govern accessibility to polling places:

- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)¹
- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA)²
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)³
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973⁴
- Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)⁵
- Virginians with Disabilities Act⁶
- The Code of Virginia, Title 24.2⁷

In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice has provided standards related to accessibility and a detailed checklist for evaluating polling place accessibility.⁸

16.2 REQUIREMENTS

16.2.1 General Assistance to Voters

State and local governments must give persons with disabilities equal opportunity to benefit from all programs, services, and activities. This includes voting. Government entities and employees must communicate effectively with persons who have hearing, vision, or speech disabilities, ensure that buildings in which services are provided are

¹ [52 U.S.C. § 20102](#).

² [52 U.S.C. § 20101](#).

³ [42 U.S.C. § 12101](#) et. Seq.

⁴ [29 U.S.C. § 794](#)

⁵ [52 U.S.C. § 20901](#)

⁶ Va. Code [§ 51.5-1](#) et. Seq.

⁷ Va. Code [§ 24.2](#)

⁸ [ADA Checklist for Polling Places](#).



accessible, and provide opportunities to request aids and services.⁹ Any voter requiring assistance may receive it from a person of the voter's choice (other than the voter's employer or union representative).¹⁰

16.2.2 Voting Equipment

HAVA requires voting systems to be accessible to individuals with disabilities in a private and independent manner including non-visual access.¹¹ Virginia law mandates that voting equipment provide alternative language accessibility when a federal coverage determination has been made.¹² These federal and state requirements override Virginia's general statutory rule declaring English the official language with provisions that alternative language materials are discretionary.¹³

HAVA requires at least one voting machine in every precinct that provides non-visual voting access. Voting equipment with audio capability for use by blind voters has been certified for use in Virginia.¹⁴ For those with limited sight, the locality should make magnifiers available at each polling place or at each voting station. For most voting equipment, magnifying sheets tend to work better than magnifying glasses with handles. Magnifying sheets are relatively inexpensive and available in many stores or catalogs.

Not all voting machines are wheelchair-accessible. Each polling place must have at least one piece of voting equipment that permits a voter with a disability to cast his or her ballot in a private and independent manner.¹⁵ The voting booth provided for persons casting provisional ballots should also be accessible. This should be a table that can accommodate a wheelchair. The table should be at least 30 inches wide, with a surface no more than 27 inches high, and an underneath clearance of at least 19 inches. If a voter with a disability wishes to vote on an inaccessible machine instead, he or she may request assistance.

16.2.3 Communications

All media materials concerning voter registration or voting which are distributed or published by the registrar's or electoral board's office or local governing body should prominently display the registrar's office email address. This will allow better online

⁹ See https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_II.htm

¹⁰ [52 U.S.C. § 10508](#); Va. Code §§ [24.2-649](#), [24.2-704](#).

¹¹ See generally HAVA [52 U.S.C. § 20101](#) et seq. See also Chapter 19 Recounts and Contested Elections for more information on accessible voting machines.

¹² [Va. Code § 24.2-626.1](#). Currently only Fairfax County is required to provide a language accommodation.

¹³ [Va. Code § 1-511](#).

¹⁴ See Chapter 12 Voting Equipment for more information.

¹⁵ See [Va. Code § 24.2-626.1](#).



communication with voters who have hearing disabilities. It is strongly recommended that the general registrar official use an email address that is generic in nature and not based on the name of an individual. Using individual names can cause confusion and loss of email when the individual is absent or retires and the voter may still retain an old email address in their records or email address book. Let the public know that polling places are accessible and tell them what assistive technologies are available to voters with disabilities. Every registrar and electoral board member should actively publicize the availability of absentee ballots, curbside voting, and the right to ask for assistance. It is important to ask the voters directly what works for them with sensitivity to individual differences.

16.2.3.1 Website

When a voter looks up his or her polling place on the Department of Elections website, the accessibility information entered in VERIS will be displayed.

16.2.3.2 TDD

Telecommunications devices for the deaf (“TDD”) are another way for people to communicate and obtain information about registering and voting. A telecommunication device for the deaf (also referred to as “TT” or “TTY”) is a telephone system in which a typewritten message is transmitted over telephone lines and is received as a printed message. Many localities have a TDD line for government offices; be sure to publicize its availability. If the locality doesn’t have a TDD line, instruct voters to use the Department of Elections TDD line. Or, use the TDD number of the Virginia Relay Center – a service designed specifically for TDD users, government agencies and other service providers. Speech-to-speech relay enables a person with speech impairment to converse on the telephone via a trained communication assistant. To access these services call the following numbers:

- Department of Elections TDD: 711
- VIRGINIA Relay Center: 1-800-229-5746 or just “711”

16.2.3.3 Signage

Signs instructing voters where to park, where to enter and exit the polling place, and which table to go to help reduce the verbal communication required for a voter with a hearing disability. These aids are also required for election day. Printed instructions for checking in at the pollbook table and for the use of voting equipment should be prominently displayed at the level where persons with disabilities can read.



16.2.4 Minority Language Provisions

If the illiteracy rate of the minority group is higher than the national illiteracy rate and one of the following thresholds is met within that jurisdiction, the jurisdiction is required to provide all election information directed to English speaking voters in the covered minority language as well.

Thresholds:

- More than 10,000 of U.S. citizens of voting age residing there belong to a single language minority and are limited English proficient,
- More than five percent of U.S. citizens of voting age residing there belong to a single language minority and are limited English proficient,
- More than five percent of American Indian citizens of voting age residing on an Indian reservation within the jurisdiction belong to a single language minority and are limited English proficient.

16.2.5 Voter Registration Facility Accessibility

A reasonable number of permanent registration facilities used in federal elections to be accessible to the elderly (defined as 65 years of age or older) and people with physical disabilities. This requirement is not binding in Virginia because we allow potential voters to register by mail.¹⁶

16.2.6 Polling Place Accessibility

Polling places are required to be accessible by the Virginians with Disabilities Act, the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Make sure that any new polling place is accessible or can be made so before recommending it to the local governing body. The local governing body is required to provide “adequate facilities” at each polling place.¹⁷ For the purpose of this law, the Department of Elections interprets adequate facilities to include buildings that are physically accessible to persons with disabilities.

The electoral board must conduct an Accessibility Survey every time the locality approves a new polling place or there is a change in accessibility at an existing polling place. Localities must send a copy of each survey to the Department of Elections, and keep the original on file at the local elections office.¹⁸ Periodically resurvey the accessibility of polling places. Just because a polling place was accessible last year, does

¹⁶ [Krieger v. Loudon County, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 138293 \(W.D. Va. Sept. 30, 2014\)](#)

¹⁷ See [Va. Code § 24.2-310\(B\)](#).

¹⁸ A suggested survey form is included in the Forms Warehouse under [Accessibility Materials](#).



not mean it will be so this year. For example, tree limbs could grow back, concrete could develop breaks, and parking signs may be removed. Investing a little time before each election can pay great dividends in preventing complaints about some new accessibility barrier at a previously accessible polling site.

Local electoral boards are authorized to use an alternative polling place if an emergency makes an existing one inaccessible. The electoral boards must provide notice to the voters appropriate to the circumstances of the emergency.¹⁹

When entering polling place information into VERIS, the registrar must check whether the polling place has met ADA standards and include a comment detailing the level of compliance. If an existing polling place is found to be inaccessible then take the following steps:

- Notify the local governing body that the locality's polling place is in violation.
- Determine whether reasonable permanent or temporary changes can be made to make the site accessible.
- If the site cannot be made accessible through reasonable means, survey the precinct and the adjoining area within one (1) mile of the precinct boundary in an attempt to find an alternative site to recommend that is accessible or can be made temporarily accessible on election day.
- The accessibility status of each polling place in the locality should always be updated in VERIS.

The following exceptions may be granted under U.S. and Virginia law:²⁰

- The Commissioner of ELECT can grant an exception to the accessibility requirement in the case of an emergency.
- If an alternate site is in a private facility normally ineligible for polling place selection, the registrar may request that the Department of Elections approve its use on an emergency basis due to unavailability of any other building meeting accessibility requirements.²¹

NOTE: 1 VAC 20-60-35 (proposed regulation on Polling Place Accessibility Assessments) should be inserted here, once the regulation has come into effect.

16.2.6.1 Parking Spaces

If parking is provided for voters, then accessible parking must also be provided at a ratio of one (1) accessible space for every 25 spaces in the parking lot. To be considered accessible, a parking space must meet the following criteria:

¹⁹ See [Va. Code § 24.2-310\(C\)](#), (D).

²⁰ See [52 U.S.C. § 20102](#).

²¹ [Va. Code § 24.2-310.1](#).



- The space must be at least 12 feet wide.
- It must have an access aisle that is 5 feet wide for car spaces and 8 feet wide for van spaces (all parking lots must have at least one van accessible space).
- It must be marked with an upright sign with the symbol of accessibility on it (the bottom edge of the sign must be between 48 and 72 inches above the pavement; marking a space on the pavement is often useful, but does not satisfy federal requirements).
- It must be located close to the entrance of the polling place.
- It must be connected by an accessible route to the accessible entrance.
- The space must be relatively level in all directions and have a firm, stable surface.

Accessible parking spaces may be temporarily created for election day using portable signs and traffic cones.

16.2.6.2 Signage

No special signs are required at buildings where all voters (those with disabilities and those without) use the same entrance on election day. However, if the accessible voting entrance is separate from the main voting entrance, then the following standards apply:

- The accessible entrance must be marked by the symbol of accessibility.
- All other entrances must have directions to the accessible entrance.

16.2.6.3 Curbs and Ramps

Temporary ramps may be used on election day. However, a better solution is to work with the owner of the building to establish reasonable accessibility. Ramps are necessary where there are steps into the building or inside the building. Permanent ramps are obviously the best option, but temporary ramps can also work when necessary. They can be purchased or rented from a variety of vendors in compliance with the locality purchasing procedures.

Curbs or ramps in the path of travel must generally have the following features:

- They must be at least three feet (36 inches) wide not including any flared sides.
- They should have a stable, firm, slip-resistant walking surface.
- They should have a slope that rises or falls no more than one (1) foot in height for every 12 feet in length (the 1' in 12" rule).
- They should have a relatively level cross slope (the slope perpendicular to the direction of the walkway).



- If a ramp is more than six inches off the ground, it must have handrails on both sides.
- They cannot have openings greater than ½ inch wide.

16.2.6.4 Walkways (Inside & Out)

To be considered accessible, a walkway must meet the following criteria:

- It must be at least three feet (36 inches) wide.
- It should have a slope that rises or falls no more than one foot in height for every 12 feet in length.
- It should have no edges that could cause a person or service animal to trip or fall.
- It should have a relatively level cross slope (the slope perpendicular to the direction of the walkway).
- It should be made of a smooth, consistent material, i.e. no loose gravel or dirt;
- It should have headroom in the pathway of at least 80 inches from the surface.
- It cannot have openings greater than ½ inch wide.
- It cannot have abrupt changes in level greater than ½ inch tall unless a ramp is provided. Sudden changes in height less than ¼ inch tall are always acceptable; however, changes between ¼ inch and ½ inch can be beveled at a slope no greater than 1:2.
- The 1' in 12" rule applies to all standards of accessibility for walks, ramps, etc.

16.2.6.5 Protrusions

Items sticking out from walls (such as fire extinguishers) pose a threat to both blind voters – who cannot detect them with a cane – and to those with limited sight. Items mounted on walls between 27 and 80 inches off the floor cannot protrude more than 4 inches from the wall.

A temporary solution is to place a large item on the floor (such as a potted plant) below the protruding item to make it detectable with a cane. A permanent solution is to build protruding walls on either side of the item or lower the item so that it is no more than 27 inches above the floor.



16.2.6.6 Doors and Doorways

Doors are among the most common accessibility barriers in polling places. For people in wheelchairs, an inaccessible door can defeat hard work getting out of a vehicle, through the parking lot, and up the walk. Several features can make a door inaccessible:

- Round doorknobs are difficult for people with limited use of their hands. Replace with ADA compliant hardware. If they can't be replaced, buy levers that fit over round doorknobs.
- Interior doors must be operable with 5 pounds of force or less. As a temporary fix, prop the door open or station an election official (or election page) to assist with opening and closing. The best solution (and most expensive) may be to install a power door opener.
- There is no requirement for the opening force of exterior doors. However, 8.5 pounds of force is typically sufficient to keep the door closed and still be usable by persons with disabilities.
- Door width is often a problem for wheelchairs. There should be at least 32 inches of clear space for a wheelchair to get through. This is measured from the face of the door to the stop on the other side not including any door hardware. Some doors that just barely fail to meet this criterion can be adjusted to gain that extra inch or two by using special hinges.
- If there is a door threshold with an abrupt change of more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, that is inaccessible. Either a new threshold or a covering ramp will need to be installed.

16.2.6.7 Stairs

Based on reports to the federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC), stairs remain the greatest physical obstacle at our nation's polling places for both people in wheelchairs and those with difficulty walking. If access to a polling place or voting room within a polling place involves stairs, then there must be an alternate route to the voting room; otherwise, the site is not accessible. There must be, either inside or outside the building, a ramp or ramps, or an accessible elevator, or a wheelchair lift that voters with limited mobility can use to access the polling place. If an alternate route must be used, large signs directing voters with disabilities are needed.

16.2.6.8 Inside the Polling Place

The inside path of travel must meet the same guidelines as the path outside. Loose rugs, plush carpets, slick floors and the like can cause problems for people with wheelchairs, canes, and walkers. Instruct officers of election to be sure that hallways and voting rooms are free of such hazards, and adjustments are made as needed.



16.2.6.9 Seating

Every polling place should be furnished with seats for the use of elderly voters or those with mobility impairments. Even if the polling place has no waiting lines, seats should be available for those lawfully present who just need to rest.

16.2.7 Request for Assistance

The Virginia Voter Registration Application includes a box allowing voters with physical disabilities to so indicate. Registrars should attempt to contact voters who check this box to explain available accommodations such as voting curbside or absentee with an annual application. Be sure to communicate to the electoral board and officers of election any information needed to plan for election-day such as arrival time for curbside voting. The Attorney General issued an opinion in 2010 that voters may communicate a request for curbside voting to election officials in advance of coming to the polling place.²²

16.2.8 Curbside Voting

Curbside voting does not satisfy or eliminate the requirement for an accessible entrance to the polling place that the voter can use at his option. The Department of Elections recommends, as a best practice, that an officer of election or volunteer is trained to check periodically to make sure curbside voting is not needed.

In the event that curbside voting is offered at a polling place, the following steps should be implemented:

- Clear and visible signage informing voters of the possibility of voting curbside, the location of the curbside voting, and how a voter is supposed to notify the election official that he/she is waiting curbside;
- A location that allows the curbside voter to obtain information from candidates and others campaigning outside the polling place;
- A method for the voter to announce his/her arrival (buzzer or bell system);
- Timely response from election officials inside the polling station, and delivery of the information that is provided to voters inside the polling location;
- A portable voting system that is accessible and allows the voter to cast his/her ballot privately and independently.²³

²² [2010 Op. Va. Att’y Gen. 46.](#)

²³ For more information on signage and accessibility, see U.S. Dep’t of Justice, [The Americans With Disabilities Act, and Other Federal Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities](#) (Sept., 2014).



16.2.9 Large Print Materials

The state must make available registration and voting aids, including the large print instruction posters in polling places and registrar's offices.²⁴

Large print directional and instructional signs should help voters with limited sight navigate the polling place and the voting process. Pictures or symbols on signs are also helpful.

Current technology can allow the enlarging of most forms and brochures, available online, to meet user needs. The locality may also consider printing forms and brochures in large print. There is no enforceable standard for large print formatting other than that the print has to be large enough to be read by the person requesting it. The general rule is to use 18-point type. Colors should contrast as much as possible (i.e. black on white or white on black). The Department of Elections' Accessibility Coordinator can provide more detailed information.

16.2.10 Signature Guides

These are usually small business-sized cards with long rectangles cut out of them. If a voter has to sign a document such as an application or a statement, a signature guide placed over the signature line will help the voter sign in the right place. No signature or mark is required for a voter who is blind to receive assistance at the polling place from an officer of election.²⁵ Applications for voter registration, absentee ballots and other forms include specific instructions about the applicable signature requirements.

16.2.11 Officer of Election Training

Every training session for officers of election should include a section on working with persons with disabilities and operating the accessibility features of all voting equipment.

- Officers of election are the ones who have the most face-to-face contact with voters with disabilities. They must be trained to:
 - look out for – and where possible remove – obstacles in the polling place;
 - provide assistance with door-opening, walking, and other means of helping when needed and requested;
 - be fully aware of the legal rights of persons with disabilities to ask for assistance with ballot-marking;

²⁴ [52 U.S.C. § 20104.](#)

²⁵ [See § 24.2-649.](#)



- provide curbside voting to any person requesting to vote outside the polling place due to a disability, or who is age 65 or older; and
- be sensitive to the needs of voters with disabilities.
- Remember that people with disabilities want, expect, and deserve reasonable accommodations to give them equal access. If the best alternative cannot be done, then try for the next best alternative.
- Treat people the way you want to be treated;
- Speak directly to the person, not to his/her companion;
- Change your position so you are at eye level with the person;
- Respect personal space; do not touch the person or the person's wheelchair, service animal, etc. without their prior consent or request;
- Ask the person to repeat what he said (including writing it, or verbally repeating, or paraphrasing the words yourself);
- Do not assume someone who is deaf or hard of hearing or who has an intellectual disability requires you to speak loudly or slowly;
- Presume competence;
- Let people be independent; ask before providing assistance;
- Let the person control his/her movements;
- Introduce yourself by name;
- Do not ask questions focused on the person's condition and do not express sympathy or admiration or other feelings related to the person's disability
- Treat adults as adults and with respect;
- Use People-First Language, which puts the person before the disability (e.g. Instead of "a table for a wheelchair is needed," say "a table for a person using a wheelchair needed").

16.3 LIMITATIONS

Public entities are not required to take actions that would result in undue financial and administrative burdens. They are required to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination, unless they can demonstrate that doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity provided. It also directs that public entities must provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to request such aids and services.



16.4 ENFORCEMENT

16.4.1 VAEHA

Localities may be sued in district court by either the US Attorney General or any person who is personally prevented from registering to vote or casting a ballot. Before any person may sue a locality under this law, the complainant must first notify the Commissioner of Elections of the non-compliant condition and allow 45 days to pass before continuing the lawsuit. This law can be used to force a locality to remove an inaccessible condition, but not to award attorney's fees unless the fees were accumulated forcing a locality to comply with an original court judgment.²⁶

16.4.2 ADA

Complaints of ADA Title II violations may be filed with the Department of Justice within 180 days of the date of the discrimination. In certain situations, cases may be referred to a mediation program sponsored by the Department. The Department may bring a lawsuit where it has investigated a matter and has been unable to resolve violations.

Title II may also be enforced through private lawsuits in federal court. It is not necessary to file a complaint with the Department of Justice or any other federal agency, or to receive a "right-to-sue" letter, before going to court.

16.4.3 HAVA

The U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division enforces HAVA. Congress did not authorize private enforcement (via litigation) of the requirements of HAVA. Instead, HAVA directs private complaints into state administrative processes and reserves judicial enforcement to the Department of Justice.

16.4.4 VDA

Any person with a disability whose rights, guaranteed under the VDA, have been violated can bring a claim in state circuit court. The court can order the defendant (locality) to make changes to its practice or procedures, pay for the plaintiff's legal fees, and award compensatory damages not including payments for pain and suffering.

²⁶ [52 U.S.C. § 20105](#).



Localities are liable for violating the VDA for up to one year from the violation of a person's rights if the person started the action or filed a complaint by registered mail within 180 days of the alleged violation.

16.4.5 Code of Virginia

Virginia's adequate facilities provision has no separate enforcement mechanism; like other election law requirements for local governments, Department of Elections and local electoral boards play an important role educating local governments. DOJ has brought enforcement actions against localities failing to meet federal law mandates.

16.5 RESOURCES

Registrars and electoral board members are not expected to be experts on building structural issues, machine technology for those with disabilities, or other assistive technologies. There are several places and agencies that can provide information and assistance with these issues. The following lists are just some of the resources available in Virginia.

16.5.1 Accessibility Coordinator, Department of Elections

The Department of Elections has a staff member, knowledgeable about disability issues, who is ready to assist registrars and electoral board members, or their staff (804-864-8901 or 800-552-9745).

16.5.2 EAC and DOJ

The federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) publishes a helpful guide addressing polling place accessibility, training of election officers and website accessibility. EAC has voter guides published in different languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.²⁷ The EAC website also provides other detailed reference materials on voting accessibility.²⁸

The U.S. Department of Justice provides compliance guidelines²⁹ in addition to a detailed polling place accessibility checklist with design standards, technical assistance materials and information about enforcement actions.³⁰

²⁷ Forms in alternate languages can be downloaded from the [EAC website](#).

²⁸ For more information on accessibility, please see the [EAC guide](#), and the [EAC voting accessibility website](#).

²⁹ See [52 U.S.C. § 10303](#)(f), and [28 CFR 55](#). For more information, see the DOJ [voting section](#), and [guidelines](#).

³⁰ To access the DOJ accessibility checklist and standards, please visit the [ADA website](#).



16.5.3 ADA Information Line

The U.S. Department of Justice provides information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a toll-free ADA Information Line. This service permits businesses, state and local governments, or others to call and ask questions about general or specific ADA requirements including questions about the ADA Standards for Accessible Design.³¹

16.5.4 ADA Coordinators

The ADA may require local governments to appoint an ADA coordinator. This individual is most likely in the personnel or building inspections department of the local government. The local ADA coordinator may not be an expert on the technical aspects of ensuring accessibility, but he or she should be able to help with interpreting the law and with surveying potential or existing polling places to evaluate their accessibility.

16.5.5 ADA & IT Information Centers

The federally supported ADA & IT Information Center for the Mid-Atlantic Region provides training, information, and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessible information technology (IT) to businesses, consumers, schools, and government agencies within the Mid-Atlantic Region. Call 800-949-4232 or go to their website for more information.³²

16.5.6 Centers for Independent Living

Virginia law also provides for government supported Centers for Independent Living, private, non-profit and community-based advocacy organizations staffed by persons with disabilities.³³ These agencies can provide advice and assistance with a wide variety of disability issues. There are many such centers in Virginia.³⁴

16.5.7 Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

This department can provide information about sign language, interpreters, special hearing devices, and communications issues: 1-800-552-7917.³⁵

³¹ Please see the [ADA website](#) for more information on ADA requirements, assistance and claims.

³² The [Mid-Atlantic ADA Center website](#) has more information on accessible information technology and training resources.

³³ See § 51.1-163.

³⁴ For more information on Centers for Independent Living, please visit their [website](#).

³⁵ Visit the Department for the [Deaf and Hard of Hearing website](#) for more information.



16.5.8 Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision-Impaired

This department can provide information about Braille accommodations, large print, recording on tapes, and other visual-assistive technologies: 1-800-622-2155.³⁶

16.5.9 Virginia Assistive Technology System

This is a program of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. It is a statewide project working to increase awareness and accessibility of assistive technology through programs, information, and technical assistance. Its website includes an equipment finder. Call 1-800-552-5019 or see the Virginia Assistive Technology System website.³⁷

16.5.10 Job Accommodation Network

[The Job Accommodation Network site](#) provides information on vendors and manufacturers of equipment and devices for people with disabilities: 1-800-526-7234.³⁸

16.6 FUNDING ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Electoral boards and registrar offices (like all public bodies) operate with limited resources. Below are suggestions to help afford accessibility improvements when the local governing body may be reluctant or unable to provide funding:

- The Help America Vote Act set aside funds for states to improve the accessibility of polling places used in federal elections. This funding was used to make all polling places in Virginia at that time ADA compliant.
- Local Disability Services Boards may suggest grant money that can be used to make such purchases. Contact the local board to find out how to apply for funding.
- The Lions Clubs will often take on projects to provide aids for persons with vision and hearing impairments. Check with the local club(s) to see if they are willing to sponsor an election accessibility project.
- Many other community service organizations (e.g. Kiwanis, Rotary, Ruritans, and the like) may be willing to help.
- The federal government offers tax incentives for businesses to make their facilities more accessible to people with disabilities.

³⁶ Visit the Department for the [Blind and Vision Impaired website](#) for more information.

³⁷ The Virginia Assistive Technology System website can be accessed [here](#).

³⁸ Click [here](#) to visit the Job Accommodation Network website.



- Check with any of the agencies listed in the Resources section below. Many of the agencies have funds for purchasing assistive technology or know of inexpensive sources for these items.
- Consider sharing costs of such items with other government offices that can use them when they are not needed for elections.

