



PATRICIA MORRISSEY
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

**STATE OF HAWAII
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES - DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
STATEWIDE ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY
NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JANUARY 12, 2024 @ 1:30 PM

Pursuant to Section 92-3.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee will be meeting remotely using interactive conference technology. Members of the public may have participated in the meeting via Zoom.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Patricia Morrissey, Chair
James Gashel, Vice Chair
Ramoda Anand
Sheryl Nelson

PROCEEDINGS

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee was called to order by Chair Morrissey at 1:37 p.m.

II. Roll Call

All members of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee were present at the meeting with the exceptions of Committee Member Keim.

III. Approval of minutes for the November 14, 2023 meeting

Vice Chair Gashel made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of November 14, 2023, which was seconded by Chair Morrissey, and approved

by the Committee.

Committee Member Nelson joined the meeting at 1:41pm.

IV. Report on the status of recommendations made to the Office of Elections by the Committee

Anthony Akamine, Election Information Specialist, Office of Elections (OE), provided a status report on Enhanced Voting. He shared that Enhanced Voting and OE completed a demonstration ballot for the public to practice marking the ballot. The demonstration ballot will be posted on OE's website at elections.hawaii.gov.

Nedielyn Bueno, Voter Services Section Head, OE, shared that the Committee received a complaint that Agenda IV "Report on the status of recommendations made to the Office of Elections by the Committee" is insufficiently descriptive.

Vice Chair Gashel shared that he is frustrated by the complaint, however, acknowledges that the Committee needs to comply. He shared that he wants to have a progress report from OE during every meeting. Committee Member Nelson expressed that she doesn't think the agenda needs to be detailed. She suggested that the agenda refer to OE's website for more details.

Lisa Seikai Darcy, Maui County Healing Solutions for Homelessness, expressed her concerns about elections. She stated that if you do not have an address, you have to choose between voting in the Primary and General Election. She also stated that residents of Hana cannot travel to Wailuku to vote at a voter service center. Ms. Darcy recommended the following to improve elections in Maui: open more voter service centers, provide free bus transportation on Election Day.

Vice Chair Gashel suggested that Ms. Darcy get in contact with the Maui County Elections Division to inquire about an accessibility needs committee for Maui County. Committee Member Nelson expressed that Ms. Darcy's recommendation for free bus fare is a transportation issue and not a responsibility of OE. Chair Morrissey shared that OE and the Maui County Elections Division would relay the recommendation to the transportation department.

V. General discussion on issues for voters with disabilities

Brian Hausner, Aloha Independent Living Maui, expressed that as a person with a print disability, he relies on voting machines to read ballot names and

questions. He asked why the Committee does not have the ability to request that more voter service center locations be established by the Maui County Elections Division.

Chair Morrissey shared that she wants someone from the City & County of Honolulu to discuss the process of how they draft the language for the charter amendment ballot questions. She also suggested that a volunteer corp could help people read and understand the ballot, and an audio ballot should be available.

Ms. Darcy shared that she personally assisted dozens of people with disabilities voting for the first time at the voter service center. She suggested that there be a separate line made for people with anxiety or disabilities because these voters may not have the physical or mental capacity to wait in lines for hours.

Donald Sakamoto, Chair for the City & County of Honolulu Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, expressed that voter service centers are important to serve those with special needs and shared that he is concerned about voters who are both deaf and blind. He also shared that he and Vice Chair Gashel are working on a bill for better transportation on the Neighbor Islands.

Vice Chair Gashel responded to Mr. Sakamoto's concern that he believes the accessible electronic ballot will provide a means of braille access and asked that OE confirm this feature. He further expressed that some voters will still need assistance regardless of the accessibility features, and wanted to emphasize that it is federal law that voters have this right.

Chair Morrissey asked if the accessible electronic ballot has an audio component. Mr. Akamine explained that audio ballots are available at voter service centers and accessible electronic ballots are compatible with screen readers. Vice Chair Gashel commented that there may not be a need for a separate audio ballot given that free screen readers are available.

Mr. Hausner suggested that there is a local number to call to help read and understand the ballot questions. Mr. Sakamoto expressed his support for this, and added that phone support be provided in different languages. Continuing the conversation on audio resources, Vice Chair Gashel suggested that the digital voter guide be available through audio format.

VI. Adjournment

Committee Member Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Vice Chair Gashel, and approved by the Committee.

To: Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee
From: Office of Elections
Re: Status Report Relating to Recommendations Received by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

The following is a status update relating to discussion from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **January 15, 2024** meeting:

- The committee provided the following recommendations to OE as it relates to accessible voting:
 - Recommend that the electronic ballot be compatible with braille refreshable display devices.
 - OE confirmed with Enhanced Voting, vendor of the electronic ballot delivery system, that the electronic ballot is compatible with assistive technology such as screen readers and refreshable braille displays.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **November 14, 2023** meeting:

- Enhanced Voting
 - Enhanced Voting and OE completed a demonstration ballot for the public to utilize practicing to mark the ballot. The demonstration ballot will be posted on the Office of Elections' website at elections.hawaii.gov.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **October 3, 2023** meeting:

- Outreach

The Office of Elections have secured voter education presentations and resource tabling with the following organizations:

- United Self Help
- Hawaii Youth Challenge Academy
- Active Senior Fair
- White Cane Walk and Vision Awareness
- Hope Services Hawaii
- East Hawaii Disability Forum
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- DOE Transition Coordinator quarterly meeting
- Access To Independence
- Access To Independence Youth

OE recently disseminated its first e-newsletter for the 2024 Elections to various groups and organizations. A link to subscribe to the Office of Elections' e-

newsletter has been added to the Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee webpage.

- Election laws referencing “voter with special needs”

The committee requested that OE review the election laws and identify statutes that include the term “voter with special needs” and look into amending the term to “voter with accessibility needs”.

In reviewing the state capitol’s website, which provides the text of all state statutes, OE identified HRS §§ 11-10.5, 11-10.6, 11-107, and 15-5 as referencing the term “voter with special needs.”

Of these statutes, HRS §§ 11-10.5 and 11-10.6, were changed to “voter with special needs” with the passage of Act 14, SLH 2023. The website is expected to be updated by the end of the year by the Revisor of Statutes with the updated language.

In regard to the remaining statutes, HRS §§ 11-107 and 15-5, they use the term “voter with special needs” to refer not only to voters who may have a disability but also to voters who have circumstances that would not otherwise allow them to receive and return a ballot by mail in a timely manner (e.g. a military, overseas, or similar voter who is out of the state). These voters are permitted to receive and return their ballot by electronic transmission. Given that these statutes are not solely specific to accessibility and there could be unforeseen consequences from amending them, we do not plan on submitting a bill regarding them.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **September 5, 2023** meeting:

- The committee recommended the Office of Elections to look at ways to streamline the ballot return process.

The Office of Elections is working with Enhanced Voting to streamline the electronic ballot delivery and return processes.

Receiving the electronic ballot – The voter will receive an email from their County Elections Division with instructions on how to access their electronic ballot using a link that will direct the voter to an online ballot delivery and return portal. The voter logs into the portal using credentials associated with their voter registration.

Marking the electronic ballot – Once the voter is logged on to the portal, the voter may choose to mark their ballot within the portal or mark offline using their own compatible device.

Returning the electronic ballot – After voting the ballot, the voter has the option to return their voted ballot through the portal. The voter will still have the option to return their voted ballot via email, mail or fax.

Demonstration HTML Ballot and Portal – The vendor is finalizing the HTML demonstration ballot that will be available to the public and incorporated within the office’s voter education efforts.

The Office of Elections is targeting to test the system in the coming weeks to review the workflow. The Office of Elections will continue to keep the committee apprised on its progress.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **May 23, 2023** meeting:

- The committee recommended the Office of Elections to look at ways to streamline the ballot return process.

The Office of Elections is working with Enhanced Voting to streamline the electronic ballot delivery and return processes.

Receiving the electronic ballot – The voter will receive an email from their County Elections Division with instructions on how to access their electronic ballot using a link that will direct the voter to an online ballot delivery and return portal. The voter logs into the portal using credentials associated with their voter registration.

Marking the electronic ballot – Once the voter is logged on to the portal, the voter may choose to mark their ballot within the portal or mark offline using their own compatible device.

Returning the electronic ballot – After voting the ballot, the voter has the option to return their voted ballot through the portal. The voter will still have the option to return their voted ballot via email, mail or fax.

Demonstration HTML Ballot and Portal – The vendor is finalizing the HTML demonstration ballot that will be available to the public and incorporated within the office’s voter education efforts.

The Office of Elections is targeting to test the system in the coming weeks to review the workflow. The Office of Elections will continue to keep the committee apprised on its progress.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Election Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee at the **February 15, 2023** meeting:

- Legislation relating to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

Senate Bill 179 passed through the Legislature and has been enacted as Act 14 renaming the committee to the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. Likewise, the name change also applies to the county committees renaming them to County Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committees.

The webpage has been updated with the new name.

The committee requested assistance from the Office of Elections to inquire with the County Elections Divisions regarding the number of alternate format ballot (AFB) voters.

There are about 300 voters that have requested to receive an AFB ballot statewide.

The committee requested for the Office of Elections to arrange for a representative who manages the electronic ballot process to attend a future meeting

The Office of Elections has arranged a meeting on May 19 with James Gashel and an Office of Election staff who manages the electronic ballot process.

The following is a status update relating to discussions from the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee meeting on **December 7, 2022**.

- The committee requested assistance from the Office of Elections to disseminate the committee's 2022 Elections Voter Experience Survey.

The Office of Elections assisted in the dissemination of the 2022 Elections Voter Experience Survey to state departments, county agencies, organizations that work directly with persons with disabilities and special needs, and media. The following confirmed dissemination of the survey within their network via avenues such as newsletters and social media platforms.

- Hawaii State DD Council
 - SPIN Network
 - DVR/DHS service for the Blind
 - Access To Independence
 - Aloha Independent Living Hawaii
 - Hawaii Club House network
 - Hawaii SAAC Network
 - Lanakila Multi-purpose Senior center
 - Oahu Veterans Center
 - Maui Economic Opportunity Senior Group
- The committee requested assistance in drafting a bill to be submitted to the Legislature to consider amending the committee name from Special Needs Advisory Committee to the Statewide Voters Elections Accessibility Advisory Committee. Likewise, the bill also includes a request to amend the committee names for all four counties for consistency.

The Office of Elections drafted a bill that has since been introduced by both legislative bodies, House Bill 131 and Senate Bill 179.

- The committee agreed to have written meeting minutes to replace written summaries as its official record of meetings.

The Office of Elections will provide assistance in drafting minutes to serve as the committee's official record of meetings. The minutes from the December 7, 2022 meeting were forwarded to committee members for review and for approval at the February 15, 2023 meeting. Approved minutes will be posted to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee webpage and the Office of Elections will keep on file all written minutes on behalf of the committee.