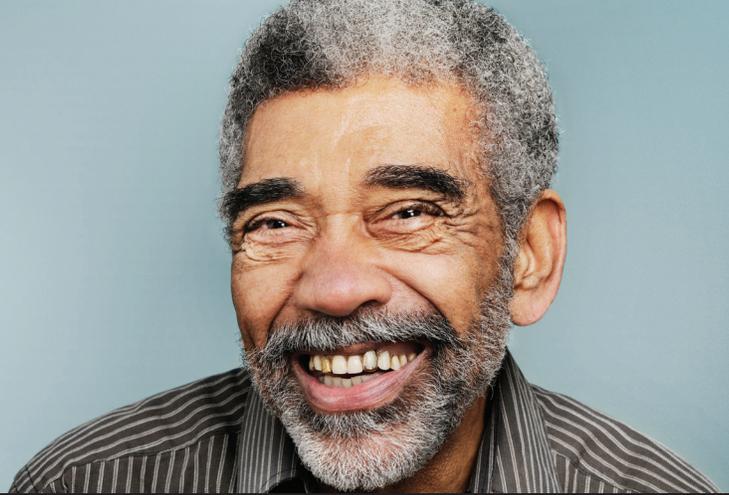


DISABILITY & AGING RIGHTS



DEVELOPED BY EQUIP FOR EQUALITY UNDER A GRANT PROVIDED BY THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING



DISCRIMINATION

Your Right to Vote While in a Nursing Home

If you are living in a nursing home, you still have the right to vote. A number of laws protect your right to vote. This fact sheet provides a summary of some of the ways people with disabilities, including older Americans with physical, mental, sensory or cognitive impairments, can exercise their right to vote while living in a nursing home.

Topics covered include absentee voting, including in-person absentee voting at a nursing home, voting if you are admitted to a health care facility* less than 14 days before an election, assistance in voting and curbside voting.

* Health care facility means hospital, nursing home or rehabilitation center.

Absentee voting

Absentee voting is also known as voting by mail. Anyone can vote using an absentee ballot for any reason.

You have to request an application for absentee ballot by mail, in person or online from your local election authority. You have to fill out the application and return it to the local election authority, either in person or by mail. You can request an absentee ballot 40 days before the election up until one day before the election if you do it in person, or five days before the election if you do it by mail.

If you apply in person, you may immediately vote your absentee ballot in your local election office. If you apply by mail, you will receive a ballot in the mail. You must fill out the ballot and return it to the local election authority, either by mail or in person. You must use the envelope given to you and you must sign and seal it as instructed. If you return it by mail, it must be postmarked no later than midnight on the night before the election.

You may receive help marking your absentee ballot. If you return your completed ballot by mail, the person helping you must sign the envelope, stating that they assisted you.

Voting in a nursing home

If you live in a nursing home (and have lived there for more than 14 days before the election), you may request an absentee ballot by following the steps described above. In some instances, in-person absentee voting at the nursing home will be arranged.

If that happens, at least two election judges, one from each political party, will come to the nursing home the Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday before Election Day and supervise the voting. The hours and days for this voting must be posted in a place in the nursing home that is easily seen.

You will vote using an absentee ballot, and the election judges must return the ballots to be counted.

Voting when you are admitted to a health care facility* less than 14 days before an election

If you are registered to vote and are admitted to a hospital, nursing home or rehabilitation center less than 14 days before the election, you can still vote.

You must obtain an “Application for Ballot for Qualified Voter Admitted to Hospital, Nursing Home or Rehabilitation Center” from your local election authority and fill it out.

Your doctor must fill out a section of the application and sign the form, too.

Either a relative or a registered voter who lives in the same precinct as you can go to the election authority’s office to hand in the form. They will be given an absentee ballot to take to you.

You can then vote the absentee ballot and place it in the envelope given to you.



You may receive help in marking your absentee ballot. The person helping you must sign the envelope, stating that they assisted you.

The same person who obtained the ballot for you must then return it to the local election authority before 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Assistance with voting

If you need help voting your ballot, you can receive help from any person you choose, as long as that person is not your employer or an officer of a union in which you are a member. You also cannot receive assistance from a candidate whose name appears on the ballot, unless that person is your spouse, parent, child, brother or sister.

The person who is helping you is not allowed to try to influence you to vote in a certain way. That person will have to sign a paper saying that he or she assisted you.

You may also ask the election judges for help. If you do, two election judges, one from each political party, must assist you in the voting booth. You will have to sign a paper stating that you have requested assistance.

Each polling place should also have other things to help you, including:

- Instructions, printed in large type, on display
- A magnifying lens to place over the booklet
- Sample ballots in large type
- A large-handled stylus, if needed
- Information by telecommunications devices for the deaf

- At least one electronic voting machine equipped with accessibility features, including audio mode for people with visual disabilities.

Curbside voting

If you vote on Election Day but cannot enter the polling place because it is not accessible because you have limited mobility, you may request curbside voting.

Two election judges, one from each political party, will bring the ballot out to you. You must be within 50 feet of the polling place. You will then mark the ballot and give it back to the election judges, who will make sure it is counted inside the polling place.

You should call your local election authority to request curbside voting at least one day before Election Day. This is the best way to make sure that you will be able to vote using curbside voting. It may be possible to arrange for curbside voting on the day of the election, but you should call the election authority to ask. ■

For more information:

Illinois State Board of Elections: www.elections.il.gov/InfoForVoters.aspx, a public website, contains voting information, lists of Illinois counties and addresses, and phone numbers and websites for various county election authorities.

Equip for Equality's information for voters with disabilities:
www.equipforequality.org/issues/voting



Equip for Equality
20 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60602

www.equipforequality.org
1-800-537-2632
1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Illinois Department on Aging
One Natural Resources Way
Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Senior HelpLine:
1-800-252-8966
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel like you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).