



## **Accessible Voting Advisory Committee (AVAC) April 6, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

In Attendance:       Debbie Adelstein, Whatcom County Auditor  
                          Nancy Moore, Office Coordinator  
                          Joel Bergsbaken, Hearing, Speech & Deafness Center  
                          David Engebretson, Representative of the Blind

Called to Order:     10:05 a.m.

Debbie Adelstein welcomed Joel Bergsbaken and David Engebretson. Due to various obligations, some members are no longer able to participate in the committee. Debbie announced the need to restructure the committee. Suggestions were made to contact Northwest Regional Council, ARC of Whatcom County, and the Center for Independence – North Sound, for potential new members.

### **Ballot Drop Boxes**

- A total of 14 ballot drop boxes are now located throughout the county; 4 in Bellingham and 1 box each in Birch Bay, Blaine, Deming, Everson, Ferndale, Kendall, Lynden, Meridian, Sudden Valley, and Sumas.
- A drop box will be in place at the Lummi Indian Administration Building in time for the November General Election.
- 66% of voters utilized drop boxes in the 2015 November General Election.
- Usage of drop boxes saves the voter a stamp and eliminates concerns for valid postmarks.

### **Updates to MyVote**

MyVote is a personalized voting resource that enables a voter to see their own registration details, voting history, elected officials, drop box and voting center locations, the voters' guide, a link to Everyone Counts (an online ballot *marking* program that allows the voter to access their ballot, and then mark, review, and print the ballot and required documents for return to the county election office), and the voter's ballot status.

- MyVote has recently been upgraded by the Secretary of State's Office to ensure broad readability and usability that includes accessibility criteria and features for persons with disabilities.
- MyVote is designed with cascading style sheets that provides a consistent and uniform appearance to headings and body text. The design enables some browsers to override the style sheets with their own to make it easier to view.

- MyVote works well with screen readers such as JAWS, Windows-Eyes, NVDA, ZoomText, and Voiceover.

### **Large Print Ballots Available at Election Division**

Debbie reminded Joel and David that large print ballots are available; a voter need only contact the Election Division to request one. Joel stated that Northwest Regional Council can supply the names of assisted living facilities that the Auditor's Office can contact to advise of the availability of large print ballots.

### **May 24 Presidential Primary Election**

The Presidential Primary Election is Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. This is the only type of election where the voter must pick a party and then vote for a candidate in the party selected. Failure to do either may result in disqualification of that ballot. The parties may purchase a list of those who voted and their party affiliation. By state law, a voter's party affiliation is maintained for 60 days but the affiliation is *not* connected to the voter's registration.

### **2016 Annual Plan**

Debbie reviewed the proposed 2016 Annual Plan but stated that until we have additional AVAC members we will hold off on approving the Plan.

### **Accessible Voting Units**

- The accessible voting units are still available at the Auditor's Office for a voter to cast their ballot. There have been no upgrades made to the units by the vendor due to the requirement for federal certification.
- The free screen reader NVDA, is now available at the Bellingham Library; it was also mentioned as a possible option for use at the Auditor's Office. The voters' pamphlet can be read online with NVDA by saving as a text PDF or as a tagged PDF. An "alt tag" will describe images.

### **Other Topics of Discussion**

Debbie continues to extend her willingness to schedule a "Meet the Auditor" session with presentations to agencies upon request. She mentioned that election staff attended one recently held. Joel suggested contacting ARC to see if they would be willing to have a "Meet the Auditor" session. He is interested in having members of the deaf community attend. Joel plans on making suggestions to the Secretary of State's Office. He relayed there are gaps in understanding about the voting process.

Meeting adjourned 11:15 a.m.



Minutes Approved by: Debbie Adelstein, Whatcom County Auditor