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## **Volunteers Survey Accessibility of Polling Places for People with Disabilities**

On November 6, volunteers from the disAbility Law Center of Virginia will take to the polls. Not to vote, but to survey the accessibility of polling locations across Virginia. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), in the 2016 election only 40 percent of polling places across the United States fully accommodated people with disabilities.

“Being able to vote is a basic civil right,” said Colleen Miller, Executive Director of the disAbility Law Center of Virginia. “People with disabilities must be able to exercise that right in the same manner as everyone else.”

In order to ensure that people with disabilities have full access to voting locations in Virginia, dLCV is recruiting volunteer surveyors. Volunteers can sign up with the disAbility Law Center and will be trained to identify five main barriers. The most common issues are steep ramps located outside buildings, lack of signs indicating accessible paths, and poor parking or path surfaces. At the end of Election Day, the volunteers will submit findings through dLCV’s online survey at [www.dlc.org/voting-rights-survey](http://www.dlc.org/voting-rights-survey).

Both federal and state law require all polling places for federal elections to be accessible to all voters. Virginia voters with disabilities who can not easily access a polling place are also entitled to curbside voting; however this right is often not honored by polling locations. dLCV receives complaints each year that voters were not able to access their polling place and were not able to obtain curbside voting tools.

“In 2016, we surveyed 238 polling locations in Virginia and found 28 percent of those had major barriers. We hope to see fewer barriers this year” says Miller. dLCV intends to publish its survey findings after the election.

dLCV encourages any voter with a disability who experiences problems in the polling plan to call them at 800-552-3962 to make a complaint.

The disAbility Law Center of Virginia is a nonprofit organization that serves as the Commonwealth’s designated protection and advocacy system. dLCV’s mission is to fight abuse and neglect and to encourage people with disabilities to have choice, independence, and inclusion in all aspect of life. For more information about the disAbility Law Center, visit [www.dLCV.org](http://www.dLCV.org).

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