

# HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT

## Frequently Asked Questions

### WHAT IS HAVA?

HAVA stands for the “Help America Vote Act.” It’s a federal law passed by Congress in 2002 to improve our country’s election system. HAVA’s main goal is to make the voting process more inclusive and accessible so that more Americans will become registered voters and participate in elections.

### WHAT DOES HAVA DO?

HAVA makes voting processes more consistent from state to state. Under HAVA, states now have standards for things like voting equipment and voter registration. HAVA also aims to educate election workers— and the general public— about voting rights and processes.

### WHY IS HAVA IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

One of HAVA’s major goals is to “ensure accessible voting.” The law gives specific guidelines about accessibility and accommodations for voters with disabilities. (See *HAVA and Your Voting Rights* inside this brochure). Congress gave money to each state’s protection and advocacy agency (P&A) to promote accessible voting, identify and resolve problems, and educate and assist people with disabilities and election authorities.

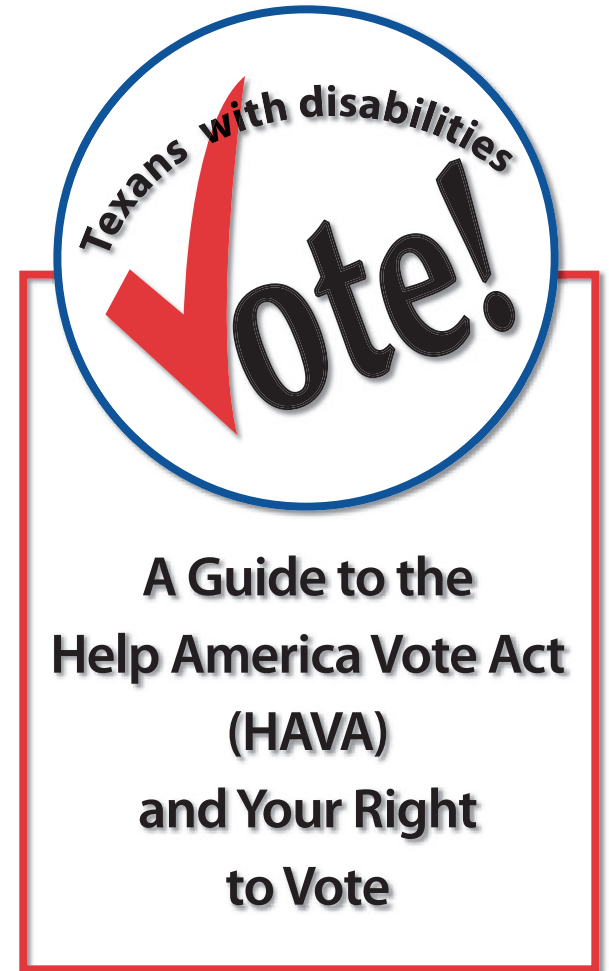
### WHAT IS THE TEXAS P&A DOING?

Advocacy, Inc., the P&A in Texas, has specialists on staff to carry out a wide variety of HAVA-related activities such as training people with disabilities on voting rights, surveying polling places, working with election officials, and responding to legislative inquiries.

In addition to these year-round activities, AI’s HAVA Project sets up a special “voting hotline” during elections to answer questions, respond to legal violations, troubleshoot problems and applaud successes.



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**A Guide to the  
Help America Vote Act  
(HAVA)  
and Your Right  
to Vote**

**ADVOCACY**  
INCORPORATED  
Protection and advocacy for Texans with disabilities



**If you have  
questions about  
registering to vote,  
your voting rights  
—or to report  
a violation—  
contact  
Advocacy, Inc.**

**Toll-free (V/TTY):  
1-888-796-VOTE (8683)**

**E-mail:  
vote@advocacyinc.org**

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## HAVA & YOUR VOTING RIGHTS

### **Voter Registration**

*People with disabilities have the right to register to vote. Many people who have limited guardianships still have the right to vote. They have that right unless a judge specifically orders that they cannot vote.*

### **Accessibility**

State law requires all polling places meet strict accessibility standards.

### **Private Ballot**

It is your right to cast a *private* and *independent* ballot. Every polling place must have at least one accessible voting device so individuals with disabilities can cast a private ballot.

### **Voting Assistance**

You have the right to assistance—from any person you choose—when registering to vote or when voting if you can not read or mark the ballot or application. You have the right to an interpreter. *It is illegal for the person assisting you to try and influence your vote.*

### **Alternative Voting Options**

You may find it easier to vote by one of the following voting options:

- **Vote By Mail:** You can have your ballot mailed to you. Contact your election official to request a ballot by mail. You can request a ballot by mail starting 60 days before an election. The last day you can request a ballot by mail is seven (7) days before an election.
- **Vote Early:** You can vote early in person. During early voting you can vote at any polling place in your county. Early voting starts 17 days before an election and ends four (4) days before an election.
- **Curbside Voting:** If you are physically unable to enter a polling place or to stand in line to vote you can ask an election official to bring your ballot to your car or the entrance of the polling place. This applies to early voting and Election Day.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT HAVA:

American Association of People with Disabilities — [www.aapd.com/dvppmain/elreform/indexHAVA.php](http://www.aapd.com/dvppmain/elreform/indexHAVA.php)

DisabilityInfo.gov — [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov) (see Civil Rights, Voting Laws & Regulations)

U.S. Elections Assistance Commission — [www.eac.gov/index\\_html1](http://www.eac.gov/index_html1)

U.S. Department of Justice — [www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/hava/hava.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/hava/hava.html)

Texas Secretary of State — [www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/index.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/index.shtml)