

RI DISABILITY VOTE PROJECT

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Participate, Vote, Succeed

Strategic Plans from the Disability Vote Projects in Georgia and Tennessee

Georgia Disability Vote! Project (GDVP)

These short and long term goals are intended to provide discussion and determine the direction of GDVP from now, through the next election, and beyond.

Short Term Goals (now through November 2006)

1. **Candidate Forums** for Gubernatorial, Senatorial, and Legislative Candidates. Will include voter registration at the forums.
2. **Voter Guide** (written in Plain Language Guidelines) posted on GDVP Web Site and possibly other links.
3. **Absentee Ballot and Voter Registration:** identify partners including volunteer directors, case managers, etc, at advocacy groups to increase voter registration and absentee ballot opportunities.
4. **Transportation** to Candidate Forum and Election Day 2006: identify rider and driver needs (MARTA passes, gas gift cards, etc), identify partners including case managers, project partner agencies, advocacy groups, all political parties, identify funding for transportation goal, etc.
5. **Demographic Survey:** learn more about who were the 115 persons who GDVP identified as an increase in “*Registered Voters following 10/04 List Enhancement*”. Did they have disabilities? Are they still voting? Do they need anything from GDVP to continue voting, etc.?
6. **Quantify Short Term Success:** should we identify a numeric goal for increased voter registration or participation?

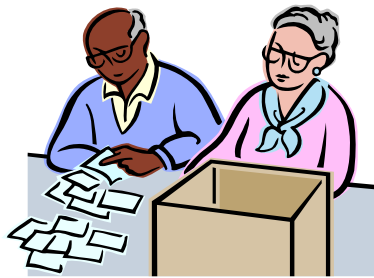
Long Term Goals (after November 2006)

1. **Nurture Voter Confidence and the Culture of Voting**
 - Obtain Electronic Accessible Voting Machine for demo/education/GDVP function purposes.
 - Absentee Voter Education
 - Create Voter Alumni Group and Voter Mentoring Programs
2. **Increase Voter Registration by 15%.** Utilize pre-existing resources to accomplish this task and identify new ones.
3. **Increase Fundraising and Organizational Capacity.** GDVP defines these objectives and goals.
4. **Long Term Goals Adoption,** do we decide what long term goals to adopt and when to adopt them pre or post election?

THE TENNESSEE DISABILITY COALITION VOTE! CAMPAIGN

Voting is the foundation of our democracy and an important civil right; voting and political participation are essential privileges of community membership. Not being able to vote is a denial of citizenship. Therefore, as citizens we have the right and the responsibility to cast our votes and participate in the governing of our communities. Every election affects each of us. The policies developed and implemented by those we elect impact us every day. The VOTE! campaign is designed to give as many people as possible an opportunity to participate in the political process. Each contribution, be it of time, talent, or ideas, is an important component in making the voting and election processes user friendly and accessible to all citizens.

In addition, voting promotes inclusion, independence and community participation. A successful, non-partisan, voter campaign leads to increased voter registration. This campaign also leads to the formation of a constituency that is knowledgeable about relevant policy issues, mobilized to help get out the vote and educate others, and is documented and recognized as an important voting force.



The Tennessee Disability Coalition VOTE! Campaign is a statewide campaign created by the Tennessee Disability Coalition. The mission of the VOTE! Campaign is to empower the disability community to be a political force by eliminating voting barriers, promoting awareness and education, and grassroots organizing.

In Tennessee, as in other states, people with disabilities have not yet organized politically in the way other groups have. We have not yet demonstrated to the politicians that people with disabilities are worth courting. Politicians need to see individuals with disabilities, their families, and friends as a force on the political scene. This means INVOLVEMENT. To be a force, we must use our capacity to deliver votes and campaign help.

To do that, we must set up a network of grassroots committees across the state that can impact their own communities and work together to further the cause statewide by:

- Increasing voter registration and voting among people with disabilities and their supporters.
- Decreasing/eliminating barriers to voting for people with disabilities, including policy barriers, access barriers, and social and practical barriers.
- Working on registration, poll access, Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV), issue advocacy, and election campaigns.
- Providing broad-based and targeted voter education on both the voting process and on disability-related issues.

This manual is designed to give the local groups and individuals the information, tools and resources that they will need to work as part of the VOTE! Campaign both locally and at the state level.

Overview: Summary of the VOTE! Campaign

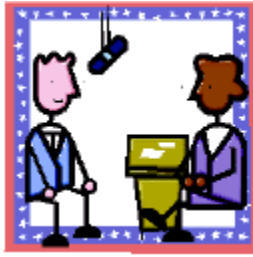


The mission of the VOTE! Campaign is to empower the disability community to become a political force that is active in communities and in the state.

The Tennessee Disability VOTE! Staff can help you set up a committee of people with disabilities, their supporters, and other members of the community. The formation of local VOTE! committees is the key to the VOTE! Campaign's success. Each local or county VOTE! Campaign group or committee will have their own particular issues and needs on which they will want to focus.

There are basic elements that need to be addressed, but whatever you do and exactly how you do it, you should choose your activities to match your community's circumstances. For example, some committees may want to focus primarily on voter registration, while others may want to do poll accessibility surveys. For this reason, we have provided a variety of useful information and "how to" activities in this manual. We hope that each group will find the information they can best use for their particular situation.

Tennessee Disability Vote Project: Sample Voting Activities



Here are some examples of activities your committee may want to undertake.

- **Record Keeping and Managing information**

Voter Identification and List Development are crucial activities for the VOTE! Campaign. A comprehensive list in each area should be compiled, consisting of persons with disabilities, their family members, persons who are interested in disability issues, service providers, and members of participating organizations. This list will serve as an invaluable resource for other activities such as voter education, voter registration, and GOTV.

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- **Voter Registration**

Voter registration should be the primary focus of each local Vote! committee. This activity includes educating the community about individual rights related to persons with disabilities and the need for compliance with the Motor Voter Act. The committee is also responsible for voter registration in person and by absentee ballot.

- **Voter Education**

Members of each local committee should work with their local election commissions to procure voting machines or paper ballots so that individuals with disabilities can get pre-election experience. Practice-voting sessions should be scheduled in places where disabled people are already gathered, such as service agencies and group homes. These practice sessions will help to dispel people's fears about voting. You may also want to hold non-partisan candidate and issue forums. If you hold a candidate forum, you should invite candidates from all the major political parties.

- **Public Awareness and General Publicity**

Publicity should be aimed at the community at large, as well as the disability community. Extensive use of the local media is recommended. This includes editorials, articles, talk shows, local public service announcements, and the Internet.

- **Get-Out-The-Vote**

The purpose of this activity is the creation and distribution of a get-out-the-vote mailer. This mailer should go out to all individuals on the comprehensive list shortly before the election. The mailer should explain in clear, simple language the importance of the disability community's participation in the voting process. The committee is also responsible for the creation and implementation of a phone bank. GOTV activities also include the creation of a comprehensive phone list; assembled from the mailing lists of participating organizations, the procurement of sufficient donated phone lines, and the recruitment and training of volunteer callers. Results should be recorded for every person on the list.

- **Locating Transportation**

Transportation problems keep many individuals with disabilities from voting. Your VOTE! committee should work with local transportation officials, local officers of political parties, local service providers, and volunteers to ensure that everyone who wants to vote can get to the polls. In addition, make sure that public transportation is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- **Training Election Officials**

Your VOTE committee can provide trainings on how to interact courteously with voters who have disabilities. All voters deserve respectful treatment, but voters with disabilities have particular barriers to overcome in order to freely exercise their right to vote. The informed, sympathetic election official can be tremendously helpful in this process.

- **Access**

We have included a separate section on access in this manual. There are a wide range of activities in which your VOTE! committee can participate to increase the accessibility of voting and political participation. These include: working with local election commissions to ensure that all local polling places are accessible, as well as surveying polling places for accessibility and reasonable accommodation both inside and outside the polling site. The ADA entitles people with disabilities to reasonable accommodations necessary to enable them to participate in the voting process.