

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

Press Office

999 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20463

Phone: Local 376-3155

Toll Free 800-424-9530



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CONTACT: FRED EILAND
SHARON SNYDER
SCOTT MOXLEY

FEC REPORTS PROGRESS ON ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED VOTING ACCESSIBILITY

WASHINGTON -- Elderly and handicapped accessibility to polling places nationwide increased to 84 percent in 1990, according to a Federal Election Commission biennial report to Congress.

FEC Chairman John Warren McGarry presented the report and testified today before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Elections that voting accessibility throughout the country had increase 11 percentage points since 1986, when only 73 percent were accessible. Accompanying McGarry before the Committee was Bill Kimberling, Deputy Director of the FEC's National Clearinghouse on Election Administration.

"The greatest problems in achieving accessibility occur in sparsely populated rural and mountainous areas where facilities are few and, interestingly, in huge suburban sprawls," said McGarry.

McGarry also said that two current developments, the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and redistricting following the 1990 Census, means there is reason to believe that polling place accessibility figures will continue to improve.

"Over the next year we will be urging election officials throughout the country to take advantage of these developments so that further progress can be made toward ensuring polling place accessibility in the 1992 general election," McGarry said.

According to the report, "Polling Place Accessibility in the 1990 General Election", of the 22,120 inaccessible voting places, problems included unramped stairs, obstructed passages and inadequate parking.

While state and local governments are responsible for polling place access, the FEC's role is limited to compiling information, providing assistance to election officials and filing biennial status reports to Congress through the Commission's National Clearinghouse on Election Administration.

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