

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION



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FEC REPORTS SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN VOTING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ELDERLY, HANDICAPPED

WASHINGTON -- Substantial improvement in accessibility to polling places throughout the nation for elderly and handicapped voters has been noted by the Federal Election Commission in a report to the Congress.

The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 requires, among other things, that all polling places in federal elections be accessible to the elderly and handicapped unless the chief election officer of the state determines that no alternative is available to an inaccessible facility. The law also requires the Federal Election Commission to report to Congress each two years on the progress made under the Act.

Highlights of the FEC's second biennial report, which is compiled from information provided by the individual states, reveal that:

- There are nearly 6,500 local jurisdictions (each headed by an official) throughout the United States responsible for conducting federal elections.
- There currently are some 152,000 polling places throughout the nation. (The total number of polling places is considerably smaller than the total number of precincts since many voting places service more than one precinct).
- Of polling places evaluated, 79% were deemed accessible while 21% (28,527) were reported as inaccessible. This represents an increase in accessibility of six percentage points (about 6,000) since 1986 despite the application, in most cases, of more stringent accessibility criteria.

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--Of those polling places reported as being inaccessible, approximately:

39% (about 11,000) were inaccessible because of inadequate parking facilities.

36% (about 10,000) were inaccessible because of obstructed passages to the polling place entrance.

56% (about 16,000) were inaccessible because of unramped stairs at the entrance to or inside the polling place.

22% (about 6,500) were inaccessible because of architectural barriers other than unramped stairs.

9% (about 2,700) were inaccessible because of architectural barriers other than unramped stairs.

6% (about 2,000) were inaccessible because of other reasons.

The report further reveals that, since passage of the Voting Accessibility For the Elderly and Handicapped Act in 1984, more than 8,100 polling places have been relocated and more than 7,100 have been physically altered to meet requirements of the law.

Copies of the Federal Election Commission's report are available from it's National Clearinghouse on Election Administration, 999 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20463. Telephone: (202) 376-5670 or Toll Free: (800) 424-9530.

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