

January 23, 2020

**Re: ACLU urges cosponsorship of the Accessible Voting Act, S. 3206**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), we urge you to cosponsor S. 3206, the Accessible Voting Act, a bill that would expand voting access for millions of Americans who continue to encounter unique barriers to exercising their right to vote. Specifically, the bill establishes new protections and improves access for individuals with disabilities and older Americans, while providing greater support for Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and language minority voters.



National Political  
Advocacy Department  
915 15th St. NW, 6th FL  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
aclu.org

Susan Herman  
President

Anthony Romero  
Executive Director

Ronald Newman  
National Political  
Director

No individual should be denied the right to vote due to disability, age, or minority status. But millions of voters continue to encounter persistent and widespread barriers to the franchise for these reasons. 1 in 4 American adults has a disability,<sup>1</sup> and a similar portion of our population is age 60 or older.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is a national disgrace that in 2016, 83 percent of polling places surveyed did not meet accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, state election websites are largely inaccessible to voters using assistive technologies.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous peoples and language minority voters are also drastically under-served by our electoral system. Native Americans and Alaska Natives bear a legacy of voting discrimination, and geographic isolation and high poverty levels exacerbate inequities in election

---

<sup>1</sup> *Disability Impacts All of Us*, CTFRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (last updated Sep. 9, 2019), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>.

<sup>2</sup> As of 2017, 70.8 million Americans were age 60 or older. *2018 Profile of Older Americans*, ADMIN. FOR CMTY. LIVING 1 (Apr. 2018), available at <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/Aging%20and%20Disability%20in%20America/2018OlderAmericansProfile.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance*, U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE 1, 16 (Oct. 2017), available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687556.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> In 2015, the ACLU published a report showing that only one of the twenty states that offered online voter registration had made that process fully accessible for individuals with disabilities. See Susan Mizner & Eric Smith, *Access Denied: Barriers to Online Voter Registration for Citizens with Disabilities*, THE CTR. FOR ACCESSIBLE TECH. & ACLU (Feb. 2015), available at <https://www.aclu.org/report/access-denied-barriers-online-voter-registration-citizens-disabilities>. Nearly twice as many states now offer online voter registration, but few have invested in making those sites fully accessible.

administration for these communities.<sup>5</sup> And despite the continued need, some communities covered by the language assistance provisions of Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act do not receive effective assistance.<sup>6</sup>

Given the prevalence of the barriers faced by these voters, specific protections and procedures are needed to improve their access to the electoral process. The Accessible Voting Act establishes comprehensive procedures, technical assistance, and guidance to election administrators and voters alike to help all Americans vote privately and independently. Additionally, this legislation addresses the deficiencies in our electoral system in a number of ways, including by enacting new federal accessibility requirements, increasing federal and state support for these voters, improving access to online voter registration, making absentee balloting and in-person voting more accessible, and improving the availability of election information and voting resources.

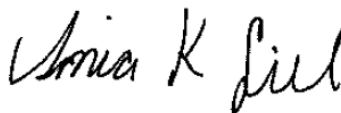
For far too long, these voting groups have been treated like second-class citizens in our democracy. We have a responsibility to ensure that all Americans can vote unencumbered by disability, age, or minority status. The Accessible Voting Act can significantly improve the dignity of their voting experience and help ensure that all Americans can participate in our democracy on a full and equal basis at the ballot box.

Please contact Josh Dubensky at [Josh\\_Dubensky@aging.senate.gov](mailto:Josh_Dubensky@aging.senate.gov) or Greta Bedekovics at [Greta\\_Bedekovics@rules.senate.gov](mailto:Greta_Bedekovics@rules.senate.gov) to cosponsor S. 3206. If you have any questions about the ACLU's endorsement of the bill, please contact Sonia Gill at [sgill@aclu.org](mailto:sgill@aclu.org).

Sincerely,



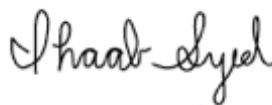
Ronald Newman  
National Political Director  
National Political Advocacy Department



Sonia Gill  
Senior Legislative Counsel  
National Political Advocacy Department



Susan Mizner  
Director  
Disability Rights Program



Ihaab Syed  
Equal Justice Works Fellow  
Voting Rights Project

---

<sup>5</sup> See generally *Voting Rights and Election Administration in America*: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Elections, 116th Cong. (2019) at 85-108, available at [https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/documents/Voting%20Rights%20and%20Election%20Administration%20in%20America\\_ONLINE\\_11-18-2019.pdf](https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/documents/Voting%20Rights%20and%20Election%20Administration%20in%20America_ONLINE_11-18-2019.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See *id.* at 71-75.