

October 21, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, October 21, 2010

The Disability Advisory Committee met on Thursday, October 21, 2010 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building. The meeting agenda is attached.

Meeting attendees were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB, AARP
Audrey Jolley, Disability Resources
Sunnie Smith, Emergency Shelter
Karla Black, Disability Resources
Judy Chamberlin, Disability Resources
Sharon Weinhold, Disability Outreach Coordinator

Several committee members who were unable to attend the meeting visited the Elections Office before or after the meeting to vote on the eSlate.

Committee members were interested in the status of the Election. Turnout predictions for the 2010 General (midterm) Election are high, the highest turnout rate in 40 years. The Secretary of State predicts a 66% turnout rate for Washington State. The Cowlitz County Auditor predicts a 64% return rate for Cowlitz County. Cowlitz County mailed 55,250 ballots on October 15. As of October 21, 5212 ballots (9.4%) had been returned. Over 60% of the ballots were returned through the accessible ballot drop boxes located throughout the county. As of October 21, six voters had voted on the eSlate, several of them new eSlate voters.

An audio recording of the entire 136-page Voters' Pamphlet is available online and on CD free to voters who request it. Voters are encouraged to study the voter information available to learn more about the candidates and issues before completing their ballot. Audrey reviewed the online audio recording, and said it is very clear and easy to understand. She did note the recording includes some extraneous information, e.g., the reader states "bold" or "capital letters", underline, etc. Audrey did not think this information is necessary.

The goal of the eSlate is to make voting easier for persons with disabilities so they can vote privately and independently. At each Disability Advisory Committee meeting, the members discuss and recommend various opportunities for marketing and demonstrating the eSlate and ways to find voters who may benefit from using it. Since the last meeting, we took several marketing actions to get the word out about the eSlate:

- Placed eSlate flyers addressing our new voting equipment in the bags that are distributed with food on Commodities Day at the main Community Action

Program (CAP) office. Commodities Day is held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month. Flyers also were posted at the distribution site.

- In our voting presentations to the elementary schools, we discussed disability voting with the students as part of an overall look at the expansion of the number of eligible voters over time.
- Participated in the Lower Columbia College first week of school student activities, held a voter registration drive, and demonstrated the eSlate. We received many new voter registrations and students stopped to view and test the eSlate. The college also put Election information on their website to remind students to register to vote and vote.
- Continued to send our weekly election mailers to activity directors at retirement and senior living homes and agency points of contact during elections, to discuss the Election and invite voters to test and use the eSlate.
- Aired our Public Service Announcement (PSA) that encourages voters to use the eSlate on KLTU beginning 20 days before the election on channels 9 (local), 28 (education), and 29 (government). The PSA is aired several times during prime time each day and at other times. The PSA also is prominently displayed on the elections website at www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/elections.
- Placed a message on the Cowlitz County Expo Message Board. The message reads: *"Time to Vote! Ballots Mailed October 15. For More Information Call 360-577-3005."* The message runs twenty-four hours a day about once every minute, and will run through Election Day.
- Updated the Elections website to make Accessible Voting Information more prominent. There is a Voter Accessibility Pamphlet, information on the Accessible Ballot Boxes and locations, Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, and a link to the Accessibility PSA Video. Voters are offered the audio version of the Voters' Pamphlet. There also is a special write-up on the website main page on the availability of the accessible voting machines.

Disability Rights Washington is conducting staff visits of Elections Offices throughout Washington State during the 20 days prior to Election Day. Areas of interest during the visits include: Notice of Election, Accessible Parking, Signage, Route of Travel, Doors, Voter Information Postings, and Outreach. During the Primary, 21 counties received a visit; the remaining counties (including Cowlitz County) will be visited during the General Election. Committee members discussed the results of the visits and actions Cowlitz County could take immediately or later to improve accessibility to voters with disabilities.

The Secretary of State's HAVA Grant Advisory Board recommended another Accessible Grant cycle for April 1, 2011. The grant cycle will give counties an opportunity to correct barriers identified during the Disability Rights Washington visits and improve access for voters with disabilities. More information on the grant cycle will be provided to the

counties later. Committee members discussed preliminary ideas for the grant cycle. One idea was to find a way to provide free transportation for voters with disabilities to the County Administration Building to attend Disability Advisory Committee meetings and to vote on the eSlate. Another idea is to improve signage and increase access to disability parking during Elections times. Sharon will explore these ideas further before the next meeting. Committee members were encouraged to think about ways Cowlitz County could improve access to voters with disabilities and advise the Elections Office or bring them to the next Disability Advisory Committee meeting.

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and participation at the meeting. Members were encouraged to vote on the eSlate if they had not already voted.

The next meeting will be in February or March, 2011.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections
360-577-3005