 **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

**“Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle”**

**BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF REPORT**Voting is the cornerstone of democracy. For too long, people with disabilities have been in the shadows in exercising this basic civil right. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), enacted in 2002, mandated improvements to the electoral process by establishing minimum standards for uniform and nondiscriminatory election technology and administration requirements, including, for the first time, requirements that citizens with disabilities be able to vote independently and privately. HAVA joins existing voting and disability rights laws to prohibit voter discrimination, suppression, intimidation, and denial of voting access for people with disabilities. Since 2002, HAVA has helped make voting an act of civic participation for people with disabilities; however much work remains to be done.

Using an open-ended questionnaire, NCD gathered the experiences of nearly 900 voters with disabilities across the nation during the 2012 election. On October 24, 2013, NCD released *Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle.* This report provides a snapshot of architectural, attitudinal, technological, legislative, and voting practice barriers that confronted voters with disabilities and provides an overview of the use of federal funds, activities, and outcomes under HAVA for people with disabilities over the past decade.

**KEY FINDINGS**

* People with disabilities continue to face barriers in exercising their voting rights because of architectural and physical barriers at registration and polling sites.
  + Nearly 40% of respondents to the NCD’s questionnaire encountered physical barriers at their polling places.
* Voters with disabilities do not have equal access to voting systems because states and localities have not invested adequate resources, planning, and training to provide reliable, accessible voting technology.
  + 45% of respondents reported barriers inside the polling place involving voting machines.
* Voters with disabilities face discrimination at voter registration and polling sites resulting from poorly trained election personnel and volunteers.
  + Nearly 54% of respondents encountered barriers, including attitudinal, inside the polling place.
  + 20% of respondents said they were prevented from exercising a private and independent vote.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

* State and local election officials must be held accountable for compliance with all accessibility provisions of HAVA, the ADA, and other relevant voting rights laws.
* States should upgrade their accessible voting equipment to assure universal access for people with disabilities.
* State and local election officials must invest in adequate training for all election personnel and volunteers.
* The Presidential Commission on Election Administration should adopt the recommendations made in the *Experience of Voters with Disabilities* report in their own report to the President later this year.

**FULL REPORT**Download a free copy of the full report at: <http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2013/10242013>