

2020 Guide for Voting in Dutchess County for the Person with a Visual Impairment

*Researched and compiled by Taconic Resources for Independence, Inc.
Intern, Jessica Rattray, from Vassar College*

How can a person with a visual impairment vote?

- by casting a ballot at their local polling place on Election Day
- by voting at an early voting center
- by completing an absentee ballot prior to Election Day.

In-Person Voting

All voting jurisdictions must provide at least one accessible voting machine per polling place. (Help America Vote Act)

Most accessible voting systems have:

a touch screen with large print and other low vision features.

Voters with low vision can

- enlarge the print displayed on the touch screen
- change the contrast to make the print easier to read
- make their selections simply by touching the screen

an audio ballot with either a synthesized or a recorded human voice. Voters with low vision can

- use headphones connected to the voting system for privacy

- go through the ballot contests and make selections using a control box with buttons or a telephone style keypad
- change the speed and volume of the audio

Mail-in ballots (!)

Blind, low vision, and other voters with print disabilities must be able to mark their absentee ballot privately and independently at home as voters without disabilities are able to do. (Americans with Disabilities Act)

HOWEVER, absentee ballots are not accessible for many voters with visual disabilities in New York. A [complaint](#) was filed stating that requiring voters to use paper ballots is discriminatory because that prevents blind people from voting "privately and independently"

From The American Council of the Blind (<https://acb.org/voting>):

In the state of New York, via Hernandez v. New York, a federal judge approved a preliminary injunction settlement between the New York State Board of Elections and plaintiffs, including ACB of New York, that provided voters a more accessible remote absentee ballot system for the June 2020 primary election. The settlement only applied to the June primary. The court case will proceed to guarantee voters with disabilities equal access to the poles for the November 2020 general election. Under the original settlement, a voter with a print disability can request an accessible remote absentee ballot online. Then, the accessible ballot will be sent via email, as well as sending an envelope with

postage to the voter. The voter completes the ballot electronically and prints it out. The voter then signs the envelope and puts it in a bigger envelope that is provided by the state. Although this is a significant win, the case will move forward. The intent is to make the process fully accessible, where voters may privately and independently receive, mark, verify, and submit their ballot electronically. Similar temporary systems have been agreed upon for the primary elections in Michigan and Pennsylvania.

In an article about this (<https://prospect.org/politics/new-york-voters-with-disabilities-left-out-of-absentee-voting/>) even if voters with visual disabilities have no trouble making their selections on the ballots themselves, they often have issues **printing out the ballots**. Many do not have access to the required technology such as a personal computer and home printer. As a consequence, many need assistance, so they are not able to exercise their right to vote privately or independently.

Information on accessible ballots in Dutchess County can be found in the following link:

(<https://www.elections.dutchessny.gov/voter-information/voting-by-absentee-ballot/>):

If you are visually impaired or otherwise disabled, such that your disability requires you to use an accessible absentee ballot application, you have two accessible options to request a ballot on this page, either using the Accessible Electronic Ballot Application Portal or completing the Accessible Absentee Ballot Application in the links below:

[Accessible Electronic Ballot Application Portal](#)

[Accessible Absentee Ballot Application with Instructions](#)