

**PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY VOTING ACCESS ANNUAL REPORT**

**OMB NUMBER:** 0970-0326

**DATE SUBMITTED:** \_\_\_12/28/17\_\_

**STATE/TERRITORY:** Arkansas

**NAME OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY:** Disability Rights Arkansas, Inc.

**FISCAL YEAR:** 2017 (*October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017*)

**FISCAL YEAR 2017 AWARD AMOUNT:** \$ 70,000

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY:**

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**Area 1**

- ❖ To ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities
  - Activities may include, but are not limited to, registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) investigated complaints regarding polling site accessibility at an early voting location in Jefferson County, Arkansas; specifically, the county courthouse in Pine Bluff. The DRA investigating advocate worked with the county election commission, the county clerk, interested citizen groups, legal counsel for the county, and staff from the state election commission to draft a solution. DRA staff attended county election commission meetings and discussed the issue in both print and television media. Ultimately, a state monitor was sent to the site and a post-election report was

issued by the state describing the issues with the voting site and recommending that an alternate site be chosen for future elections.

- DRA received a call from a patient at the Arkansas State Hospital (ASH) who was concerned about his access to a means of voting. DRA staff contacted ASH administration and discussed the issue with social services staff. This individual and all patients at ASH were subsequently provided with absentee ballots.
- DRA was contacted on an election day by an individual who was concerned that a church serving as a polling site in North Little Rock would not be accessible for individuals in wheelchairs. Specifically, DRA was informed that there were issues with the amount of available accessible parking spaces and with improperly ramped steps at one of the entrances. DRA staff contacted a member of the Pulaski County Election Commission, who said they would go to the polling site and address accessibility issues. No further complaints about the site were received.
- DRA received a call from a concerned citizen regarding the 232 residents of a nursing facility not being provided with transportation to the polls, or with access to absentee ballot forms. DRA staff contacted the director of the facility and discussed the issues with her. While transportation to the polls would not be provided due to issues the facility experienced with parking and the amount of time involved in similar past efforts, the residents were provided with absentee ballot applications several times prior to a local election day, in case they did not have the means to physically go to the polls.
- DRA did not receive any other calls from individuals with disabilities who encountered issues with voting accessibility; however, there were no major elections in FY2017. Detailed information about voter accessibility was provided on DRA's website and other social media (Twitter and Facebook), which included alerts about registration deadlines, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) brochure about voting, information on ADA compliance at polling sites, information about how to check your registration status, and information for contacting DRA or the Arkansas Secretary of State's office regarding polling site accessibility issues.
- DRA conducted access surveys of polling sites in several Arkansas counties, including Pulaski, Conway, Yell, Faulkner, White, Van Buren, Pope, and Logan counties.

**Number of individuals served:**

- Approximately 3,000 voters were potentially impacted by the changing of a polling site in Jefferson County from an inaccessible site to an accessible site. This impact was determined by a 14.7% disability rate for the county, of which 41,739 residents are registered voters.

- Approximately 1,000 individuals with disabilities received information on voting and voter registration from DRA in FY2017 via outreach and training activities, with additional numbers of individuals receiving information through social media.

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- DRA hosted, co-hosted (with collaborators) and participated in outreach and training events in an effort to increase voter participation and knowledge.
- DRA continued to partner with the Arkansas Statewide Independent Living Council, the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities and three Centers for Independent Living to increase voters with disabilities’ knowledge of their voting rights.
- DRA utilized its website, Facebook page and Twitter account to increase voters with disabilities’ knowledge of their right to vote, including a checklist for polling site accessibility, a voting FAQ, solutions for common accessibility issues at polling sites, information on how to check voter registration, and announcements about registration deadlines.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- DRA aspired to visit every polling site in the state to determine if they were accessible; however, we were unable to accomplish this due to staff resources being required for other priorities. DRA is committed to completing this objective in FY2018; barring that, DRA will visit at least some polling sites in each of Arkansas’ 75 counties.

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 1: \$20,078**

**Description of activities in Area 1 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- DRA ensured eligible voters at the Arkansas State Hospital and a nursing home had the opportunity to vote. Given the emphasis on the accessibility of polling sites, and the oversight provided by the Secretary of State’s office to polling site accessibility, it is conceivable that voter disenfranchisement of people with disabilities is happening to a greater degree in long-term-care facilities, where residents face numerous obstacles in exercising their right to vote.

**Area 2**

- ❖ To provide education, training and assistance to individuals with disabilities that will promote their participation in the electoral process.
  - Activities may include, but are not limited to, education regarding voter registration, providing individuals with disabilities with information regarding

their legal rights pertaining to voting, and providing assistance to individuals with disabilities in accessing the polls on Election Day.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA partnered with Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) to develop and schedule voter training events for individuals with disabilities living in the community. Throughout the course of FY2017, DRA staff collaborated with other individuals and organizations to gather materials and develop a curriculum for a series of training events. Those events are scheduled to begin in the second quarter of FY2018.
- DRA continued to update voting publications, particularly the voting FAQ, to ensure that individuals with disabilities were receiving the most factual and current voting information, and made sure these materials were available through the DRA website and other social media (see outreach and education in Area 1 for a list of voting publications). This was complicated by the Arkansas State Legislature reinstating a Voter ID law, an earlier version of which had already been struck down by the Arkansas Supreme Court. DRA is currently waiting to see if there will be a legal challenge to the new law, in which case PAVA materials will be revised accordingly.
- DRA provided voting rights information and voter registration forms at 20 outreach and four training events.
- Voter registration forms were made available to interested individuals at DRA outreach and training events, alongside the voting FAQ and the PAVA brochure.

**Number of individuals served:**

- Rights trainings were provided to two voters with disabilities.
- DRA distributed 1,680 voting publications, to include a PAVA brochure (969), voter registration forms (50), and a voting FAQ (661).
- By the end of FY2017, DRA had over 27,000 website page views, 2,597 Facebook followers, and 731 Twitter followers.

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- The trainings conducted by DRA were held at the following locations:
  - The two individuals who specifically received training about voting rights were participants in a transition fair for high school students.

- Many more individuals were educated about their voting rights by obtaining copies of the voting FAQ. As individuals visited DRA’s booth at outreach events, they were informed about DRA’s PAVA program, and the voting FAQ was specifically pointed out as a great primer for someone who had any questions about voting in Arkansas.
- When DRA staff conducted presentations about DRA and its services, the PAVA program and its activities was always included in the presentation. DRA conducted these presentations several times throughout the year to new students at the Arkansas Career Training Institute, a residential program for individuals receiving services from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS).
- DRA discussed with a juvenile treatment center’s administration the idea of DRA conducting presentations in 2018 about voting for the youth they serve, in preparation for the 2018 elections; the administration was receptive to the idea.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- None

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 2: \$14,000**

**Description of activities in Area 2 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- None at this time.

**Area 3**

- ❖ Participate in advocacy and education efforts revolving around HAVA implementation efforts in their State or Territory.
  - Activities may include, but are not limited to, participation on HAVA State Planning Committee, subcommittee or coalition efforts regarding the State Plan, and review, advocacy, and education concerning the enactment of HAVA State Legislation.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA continues to be a principal member of the Arkansas Disability Policy Consortium, which usually hosts an annual summit for people with disabilities to meet and discuss identified issues of concern for people with disabilities and how to address them with policy makers. The decision was made to not hold a summit in FY2017, but to plan for a major summit in FY2018, prior to the 2018 elections. DRA was instrumental this

summer in adding voting to the list of priority areas to be addressed at the FY2018 summit.

**Number of individuals served:**

- N/A

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- DRA continued to participate in various coalitions consisting of disability organizations throughout the state, including the Arkansas Statewide Independent Living Center, the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities and three Independent Living Centers, with the goal of coordinating outreach and education regarding voters’ rights throughout FY2017.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- N/A

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 3: \$2,000**

**Description of activities in Area 3 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- N/A

**Area 4**

- ❖ Training and education of election officials, poll workers, and election volunteers regarding the rights of the voters with disabilities and best practices in working with individuals with disabilities.
  - Activities may include, but are not limited to, providing training and participating in the development of training education programs for election officials and poll workers.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA staff interacted with several state and county officials throughout the course of the year, both as part of our polling site activities and as a part of other initiatives. On these occasions, DRA discussed issues including polling site accessibility, voter outreach, and training activities for election officials and poll workers, for which DRA offered its expertise and assistance.

- DRA maintained on its website a poll worker’s guide, “Helping Arkansas Vote: A Poll Worker’s Guide to Assisting Voters with Disabilities.” DRA also maintained a supply of physical copies of this guide, and made them available at outreach events.

**Number of individuals served:**

- N/A

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- DRA continued to provide copies of our poll worker’s guide to those who requested them, as well as making this document available online via the DRA website.
- DRA continued to provide a “Checklist for Accessibility of Polling Sites” that could be viewed and/or downloaded from the DRA website.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- None

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 4:** \$1,500

**Description of activities in Area 4 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- N/A

**Area 5**

- ❖ To assist individuals with disabilities in filing complaints under the State-based administrative grievance procedure required by HAVA and represent individuals with disabilities in any hearing that may be held regarding the complaint.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA received no calls in FY2017 from voters which led to assistance with a formal administrative grievance.

**Number of individuals served:**

- No individuals were served in this area.

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- None outside of the general PAVA educational activities as described above, and encouragement via all social media outlets to notify DRA upon encountering violations of voter accessibility laws.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- DRA received no calls requesting assistance in utilizing the State-based administrative grievance procedure.

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 5:** \$0.00

**Description of activities in Area 5 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- N/A

**Area 6**

- ❖ To provide assistance to States and other governmental entities regarding the physical accessibility of polling places.
  - Activities may include, but are not limited to, surveying polling places, identifying potential modifications to make specific polling places accessible, and developing criteria for identifying accessible polling places.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA surveyed several polling sites in a number of counties in order to gather data on any barriers to accessibility at those sites, including issues that were not outright violations but resulted in less than ideal situations for voters with disabilities (e.g. gravel parking lots). DRA staff discussed the results of these surveys with election officials, including members of election commissions, other policy makers and television media. This activity will be continued in FY2018.
- DRA identified issues with an early voting site in Jefferson County and brought it to the attention of state and county officials.

- DRA identified issues with a polling site in Pulaski County and brought it to the attention of county officials.
- DRA continued to provide materials via the DRA website that provided information and education for officials and poll workers alike about voting accessibility.

**Number of individuals served:**

- It is difficult to determine the number served, without knowing how many individuals were impacted by the polling site accessibility surveys and the online educational information, although the number realistically would be in the thousands. DRA’s website was visited over 27,000 times in FY2017.

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- Informing individuals during training/education events and outreach events about PAVA, including DRA’s availability to conduct access surveys of polling sites and otherwise assisting voters with disabilities with voting access issues.
- Provision of online resources and information to increase voting accessibility knowledge for individuals with disabilities, as well as for government officials and poll workers.

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- While all complaints made to DRA were investigated, and several polling site surveys were conducted, DRA fell short of its goal to survey every polling site in the state. It is a goal of DRA’s in FY2018 to visit at least some of the polling sites in each of Arkansas’ 75 counties, and DRA has allotted 20% of one advocate’s time to exclusively working towards DRA’s PAVA goals and priorities, with a goal to complete the polling site survey process in advance of the November 2018 mid-term elections.

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 6: \$8,500**

**Description of activities in Area 6 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- N/A

**Area 7**

- ❖ To obtain training and technical assistance on voting issues, including education regarding accessible voting equipment and systems. Once educated, the information may be used to inform others of the availability of accessible voting equipment and its use.

***Goal/Activity for FY2017:***

**Description of activities performed and completed:**

- DRA staff attended the 2017 National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland and attended sessions dedicated to PAVA.
- DRA staff remained active on the NDRN Voting LISTSERV.
- DRA staff participated in webinars regarding voting rights issues for individuals with disabilities.

**Number of individuals served:**

- N/A

**Description of types of outreach and education:**

- Continuing education through attendance and participation in conferences, LISTSERVS, and webinars, primarily through the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN).

**Description of activities NOT completed and the barriers and/or reasons:**

- N/A

**Total amount of HAVA funding expended on activities in Area 7: \$4,500**

**Description of activities in Area 7 that displayed innovation which can be shared as “Best Practices” with other State P&A’s:**

- None at this time.

**Citizen feedback regarding the improvements and/or changes to ensure full participation in the electoral process:**

- DRA ran a “Voters with Disabilities Experience Survey” created by Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), and requested feedback from participants. Since the feedback went to SABE, DRA is unsure of the feedback received. DRA has not received any feedback from voters specific to DRA’s PAVA program, although voting was included in the request for public input on DRA’s annual goals and priorities.

**Funding carried over from previous fiscal years:**

- FY 2012 - \$23,338

- FY2013 - \$11,544
- FY2014 - \$16,242
- FY2015 - \$49,000
- FY 2016 - \$14,667

**Explanation of spending trend:**

HAVA funds have been used to meet the goals and objectives of the HAVA grant. No funds have been returned to the government, as they are needed here in Arkansas. Some carryover is essential to HAVA operations, since the funds in a fiscal year beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> have routinely not been awarded prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.

In FY2018, Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) anticipates increasing the knowledge of individuals with disabilities on their right to vote through trainings, registration forums, outreach events, and coalition building. Additionally, DRA will attempt to work with state officials to ensure Arkansas is equipped with the most up-to-date voting equipment possible, and that Arkansas is prepared for upcoming congressional and local elections. DRA will also be continuing to monitor polling sites for accessibility and following up with election officials regarding any barriers at polling sites either observed by or reported to DRA.