

Recent Changes to Arkansas Voting Laws

The regular session of the Arkansas 93rd General Assembly saw a number of changes to our voting laws, particularly concerning early and absentee voting.

How will these changes impact voters with disabilities? Read on to find out.

1.

Act 249

Removes the ability of individuals to vote a provisional ballot using a sworn statement in lieu of photo ID. Voters who cast provisional ballots will have to show photo identification by noon on the Monday following Election Day. **This law will prevent those who don't drive, or who don't have a valid ID, from voting.**

2.

Act 736

This act reduces the number of absentee ballots in a person's possession that creates a rebuttable presumption of intent to defraud from 10 to 4. Among other problems this creates, it **affects the ability of people with disabilities in institutions to have their ballots returned for them.**

The act also requires voters to provide their mailing and residential voting addresses on absentee ballots and requires election officials to compare the name and address on an absentee ballot application with the information on the voter statement - and not count the ballot if it does not compare. These extra technical requirements mean that in order for individuals to ensure that their ballots are not thrown out they have to **make sure that they are following all instructions and that all information and signatures on the ballot and voting statement are as consistent as possible.**

3.

Act 723

This act prohibits a person from entering or remaining in an area within 100 feet of the primary entrance to a building where voting is taking place except for a person entering or leaving the building for lawful purposes. This means that groups who have provided aid, such as water bottles, to individuals waiting in long lines to vote are no longer allowed to do so. This bill **does not prevent an individual with a disability from bringing an individual with them to assist with voting** because that is protected by federal law and the individual who is there to assist is there for a lawful purpose.

4.

Act 973

This act **moves up the deadline for returning absentee ballots in person.** It does not change the deadline for mailed-in ballots. Absentee ballots returned in person by the voter and/or designated bearer must be returned by 5 p.m. the Friday before Election Day. Absentee ballots that are mailed in must be received by the County before 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Questions? Call us at 800-482-1174
or visit us online at www.DisabilityRightsAR.org

