



Helping Arkansas

VOTE

A poll worker's guide to
assisting voters with disabilities

16% of eligible voters in Arkansas have a disability.

American Community Survey, 2009

The poll worker plays a large role helping citizens access the ballot.



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Access

Ensure polling site is accessible
Be an effective communicator
Be familiar with the accessible voting machine

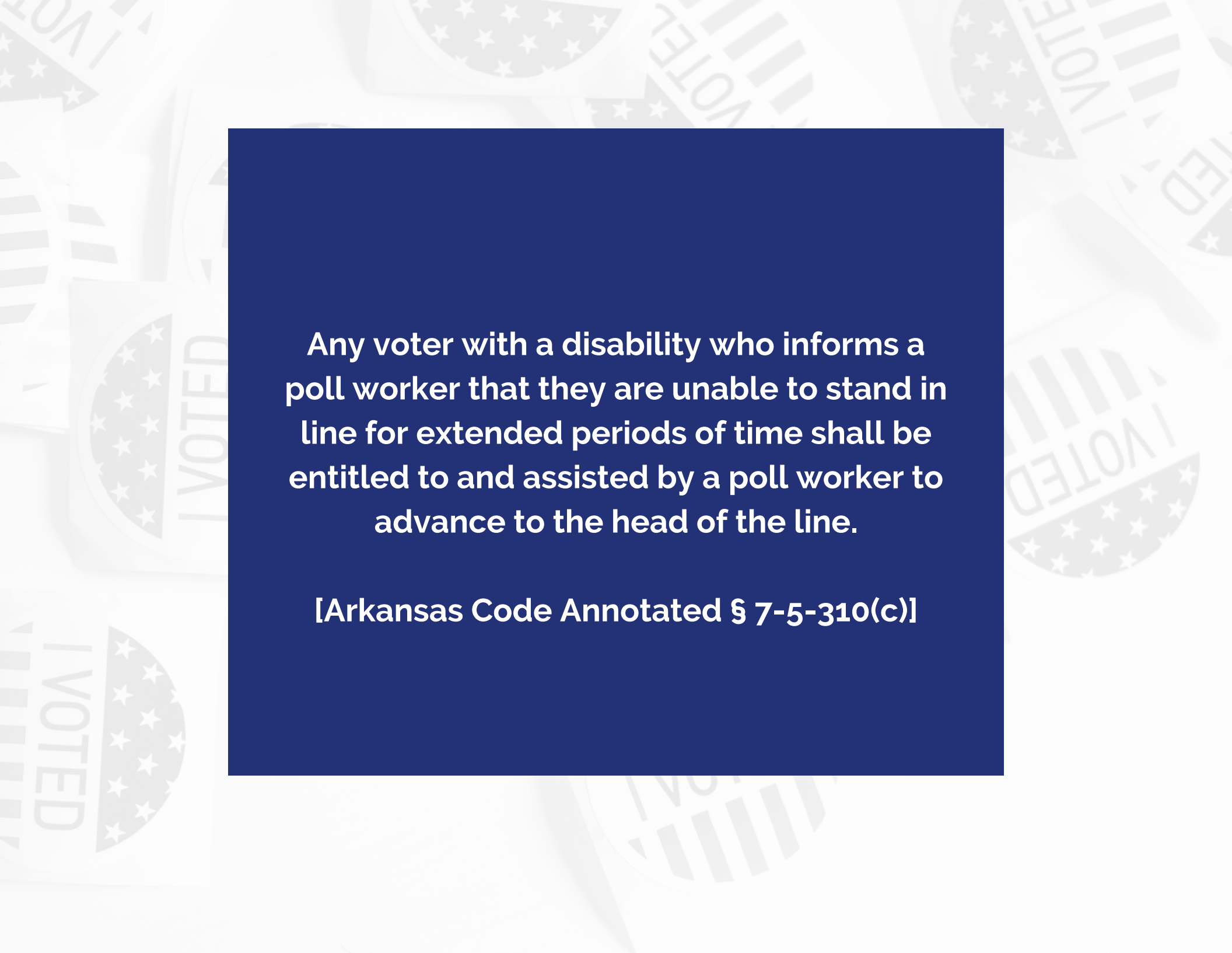
Assist

Assist voters with all types of needs

Accommodate

Locate and use election accommodations

Resources



Any voter with a disability who informs a poll worker that they are unable to stand in line for extended periods of time shall be entitled to and assisted by a poll worker to advance to the head of the line.

[Arkansas Code Annotated § 7-5-310(c)]

Is your polling site accessible?

Poll Site Accessibility Checklist

Parking

- ☐ Accessible spaces are close to the entrance.
- ☐ The passenger drop-off zone is level.
- ☐ Accessible spaces are marked with signs.
- ☐ There are enough accessible spaces. (min. 1 van-accessible space per every 25 regular spaces)

Walkways are...

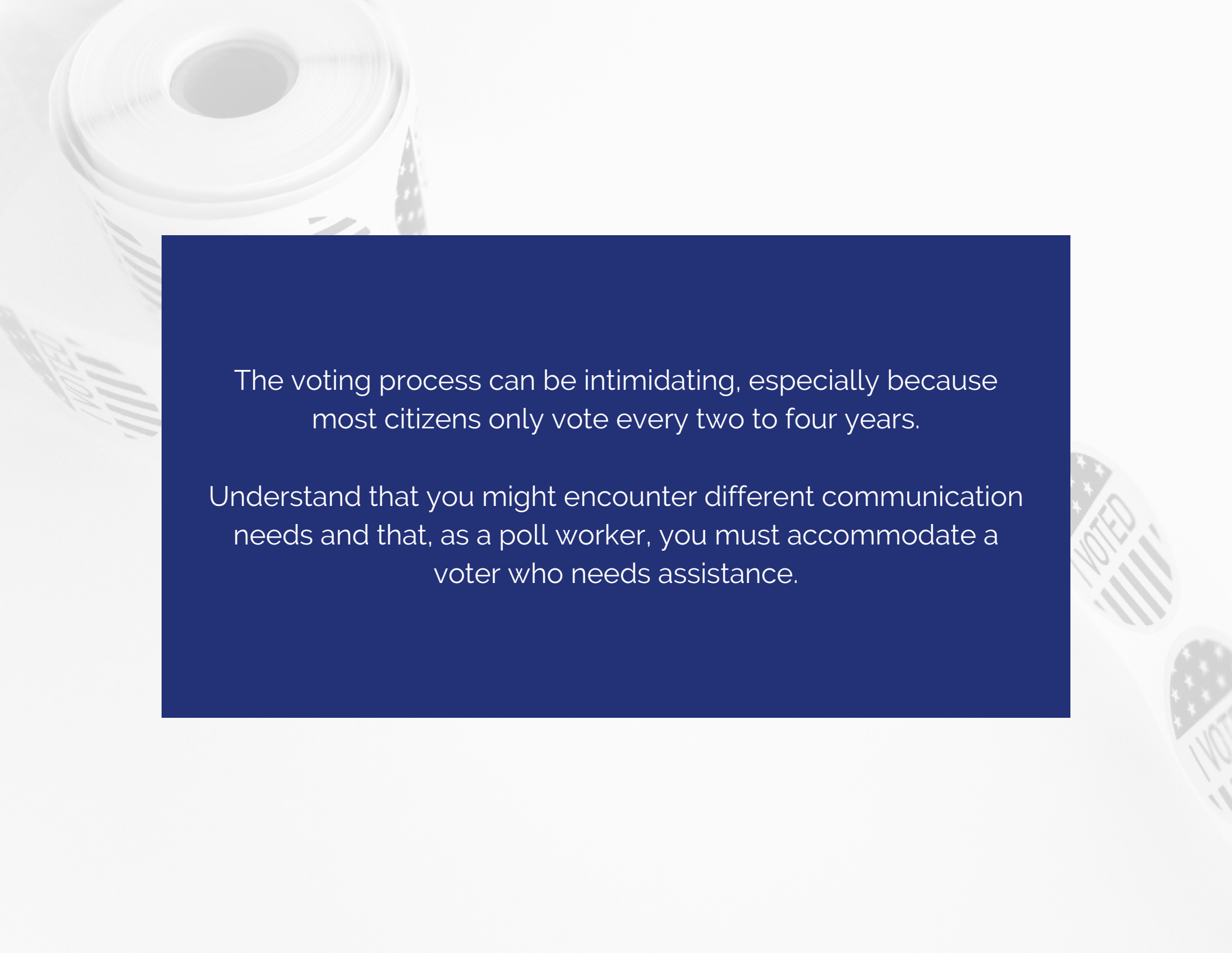
- ☐ Wide enough for a wheelchair or walker (min. 32 inches).
- ☐ Free of debris, snow, and ice.
- ☐ Marked with signs clearly pointing voters to the accessible entrance.

At check-in

- ☐ Magnifying devices and communication boards are out and readily available.
- ☐ Seating is available for voters who need it while waiting.

Inside the polling site

- ☐ All doors have levers or push-bar handles.
- ☐ All doors on the accessible route are unlocked and can be opened by the voter.
- ☐ Accessible pathway inside the polling site is free of hanging and protruding objects.
- ☐ Doors, hallways, and voting areas are wide enough to maneuver a wheelchair.
- ☐ Temporary ramps are placed in the proper locations and elevators are in working condition.



The voting process can be intimidating, especially because most citizens only vote every two to four years.

Understand that you might encounter different communication needs and that, as a poll worker, you must accommodate a voter who needs assistance.

Are you an accessible poll worker?

Depending on their disability, a person may require...

- ☒ Assistive technology (see glossary)
- ☒ Pen and paper
- ☒ Lip-reading
- ☒ American Sign Language interpreter
- ☒ Communication board

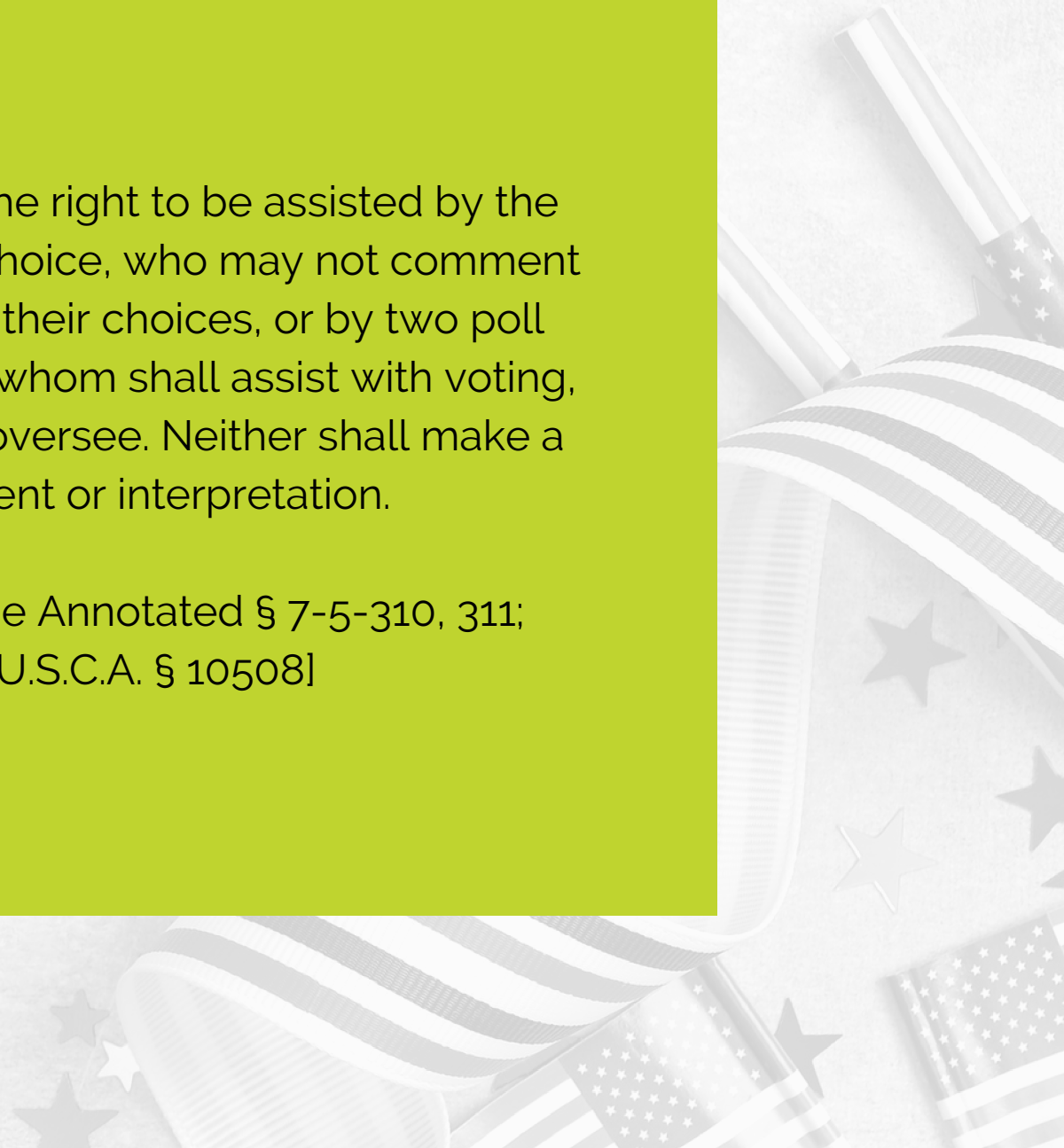
Remember to be patient...

- ☒ Some voters communicate in a way that may be hard to understand.
- ☒ They may require an assistant to help translate.
- ☒ Allow voters time to finish their thoughts or actions.
- ☒ Repetition may be necessary, for you or the voter.

Understanding effective voter communication

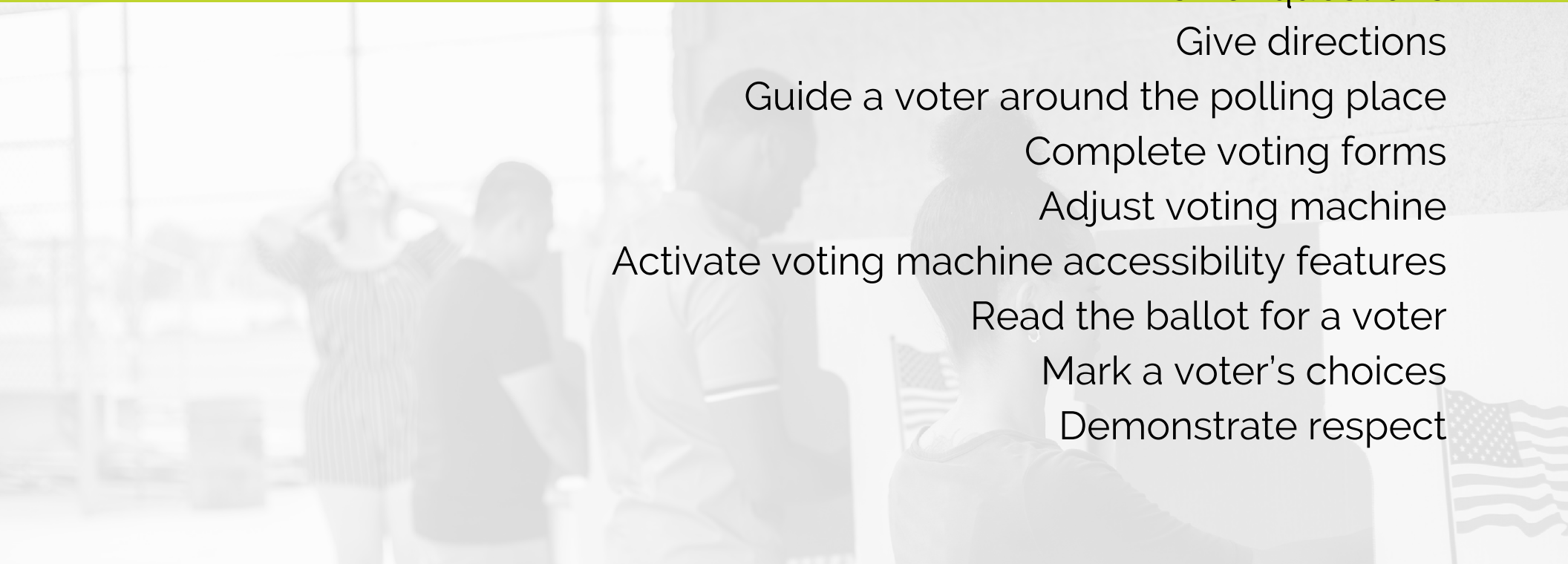
The voter has the right to be assisted by the person of their choice, who may not comment on or interpret their choices, or by two poll workers, one of whom shall assist with voting, the other shall oversee. Neither shall make a comment or interpretation.

[Arkansas Code Annotated § 7-5-310, 311;
52 U.S.C.A. § 10508]



Assist

- Make no assumptions
- Ask if assistance is needed
- Allow space for the voter to speak
- Listen
- Communicate directly with the voter
- Use People First Language
- Speak at a normal volume unless otherwise asked
- Repeat yourself as often as needed
- Open doors
- Answer questions
- Give directions
- Guide a voter around the polling place
- Complete voting forms
- Adjust voting machine
- Activate voting machine accessibility features
- Read the ballot for a voter
- Mark a voter's choices
- Demonstrate respect



Respect the voter...

As poll workers, you are responsible for offering assistance to every voter.

Remember...

Be respectful

Voters with disabilities want to be treated the same as everyone else.

Show them the same respect you expect to receive.

Use People First language

Always put the person before their disability:

“Person who is blind.”

“Voter who uses a wheelchair.”

Address the voter

Some voters may have an assistant or an interpreter.

Always look at and speak to the voter, not the assistant.

Just ask

Offer assistance to every voter.

However, don't automatically assist unless the voter clearly needs help or has asked for assistance.

...relax and use common sense

"Can I assist you?"

Assisting voters with **physical and mobility** disabilities

YES.
I need help!

NO,
thank you.

Filling out
paperwork

Adjusting the voting
machine for my
wheelchair

Removing
barriers from my
path

Opening a door

Respect the voter's request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.

Helpful notes...

When communicating with a voter who uses a wheelchair, give them some space and speak with them at their eye level.

When helping someone take a step or move, ask which is the best way to do so.



Important:

Every polling place is required by law to have an accessible voting machine. **Make sure you know how to adjust this machine** for voters using a wheelchair.

If you do not, **ask your Supervising Election Official.**

"Can I assist you?"

Assisting voters with **sensory and speech** related disabilities

YES.

I need help!

NO,
thank you.

Changing the color
contrast on the
voting machine

Using the audio
headset on the
voting machine

Knowing where to go

Communicating

Respect the voter's request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.

Helpful notes...

Voters who are deaf or hard of hearing

Let the voter establish how they want to communicate. Examples include: paper and pen, lip-reading, and sign language.

Directly face the voter when you speak.
Speak normally and respectfully.

Be prepared to move to a quieter area if necessary.



Voters who have a visual disability

Always verbally identify yourself and others.

When guiding someone, always ask the best way to do so. Describe any obstacles as you approach them.

Guide dogs: Do not pet or distract a guide dog. It is responsible for its owner's safety.

Helpful notes...

Voters who have a disability that affects speech

Be attentive, patient, and always allow the voter to complete their thoughts.

Repetition is a normal part of conversation.
Indicate if you do not understand.

Voters may use different types of assistive technology to speak for them or help them communicate.



Always communicate **with the voter,**
not their interpreter or assistant.

IMPORTANT

Every polling place is required by law to have an accessible voting machine.

Make sure you know how to activate the machine and its accessible features.

Accessibility features may include adjustments, audio headset, color contrast, accessible touchpad or swivel dial.



"Can I assist you?"

Assisting voters with **cognitive and intellectual** related disabilities

YES.

I need help!

NO,
thank you.

Simplifying all the
steps to casting a
ballot

Understanding how
the voting machine
works

Reading the ballot

Communicating

Respect the voter's request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.

Helpful notes...

Voters with a cognitive disability that affects communication



Keep your communication simple and respectful.

Stay on point by focusing on one topic at a time.

Repetition - If appropriate, repeat back any messages to confirm mutual understanding.

Allow the voter time to respond, ask questions, and clarify your comments.

Focus on the person, paying attention to any body language or gestures.

Excerpted from Tennessee Disability Coalition; "Disability Etiquette: Engaging People with Disabilities"

There are many accommodations provided by your Election Office.

You may be familiar with many of them.



Some accommodations for voters with vision loss may include tactile markers on voting machines or materials in large print (if available).

Provide extra seating as needed. Allow those who need assistance to move to the front of the line.



Navigate

Signs & cones to create accessible parking spaces

Temporary ramps for wheelchair access

Signs to help mark the accessible path

Door knob converters (for hard-to-open doors)

Allowance for voters to move to the front of the line and vote sooner

Seating for voters who cannot stand for long periods of time

At least one voting machine that can be adjusted for a voter using a wheelchair



Communicate

Communication board

Voter-owned communication boxes

Voter's choice of companion or assistant to help them communicate

Participate

Vision and audio aids

Magnifying lenses

Signature guides to help voters sign their name

At least one voting machine in every polling place that offers:

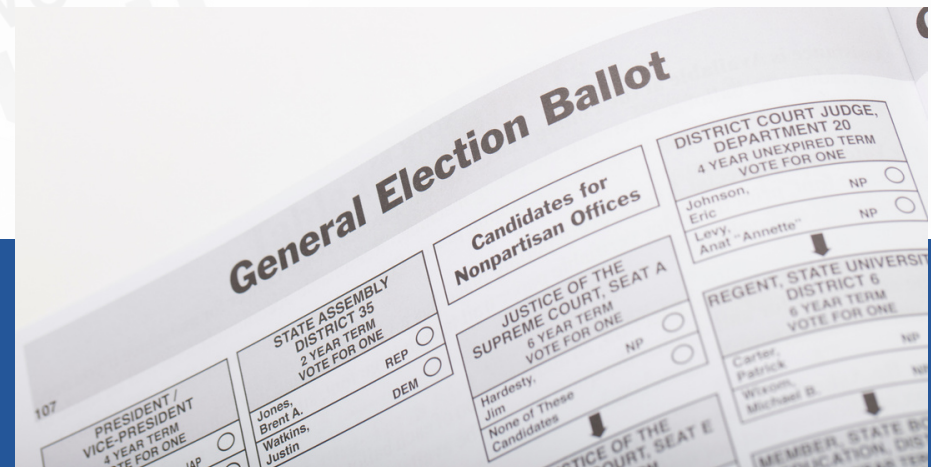
- Headphones for voters to hear their ballot
- Color contrasts on the voting screen, such as white text on a black background, for voters to read their ballot



Other voter accommodations

Voters may bring completed sample ballots to help remember their selection.

Voters may request assistance from a poll worker or someone of their choice.



Glossary

Accessibility

Permission, liberty, or ability to enter to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing

Accommodations

Something supplied for convenience or to satisfy a need

American Sign Language (ASL)

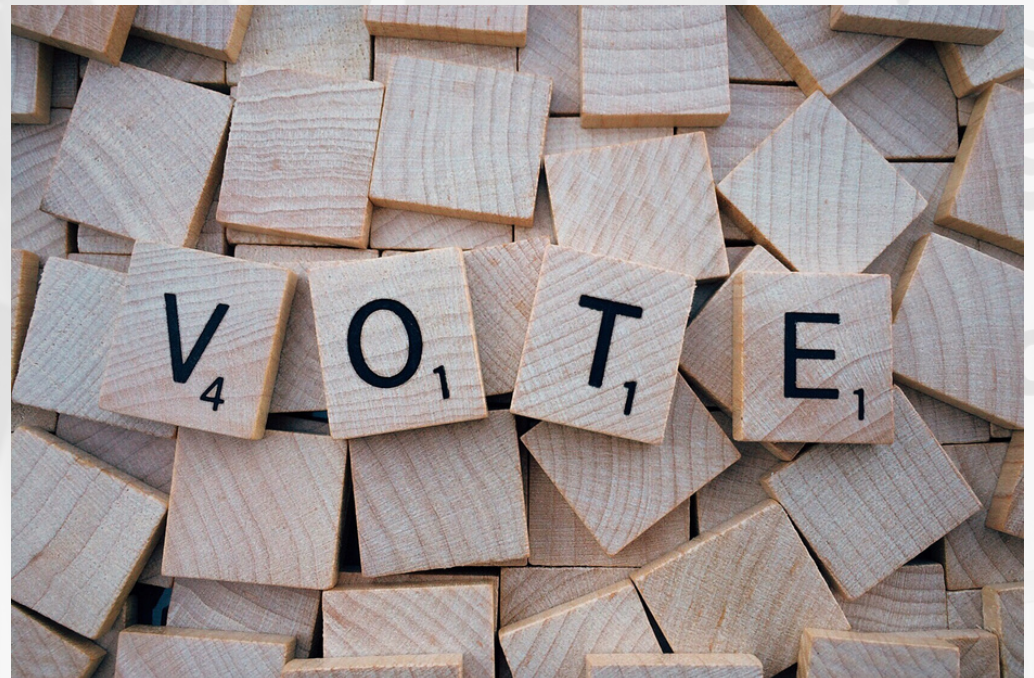
The primary language of many individuals who are deaf, conveyed by a system of articulated hand gestures in relation to the upper body

Assistance

To give support or aid

Assistive Technology

Assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices used to aid people with disabilities in everyday activities such as communication and mobility; e.g. electronic communication devices, voter-owned voice boxes, screen readers for people with vision loss, etc.



Glossary

Cognitive Disability

A disability that affects conscious intellectual activity such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering

HAVA

The Help America Vote Act of 2002; mandates every precinct to have one voting machine that is accessible to people with disabilities, statewide voter registration database, provisional ballots, and a system to check for errors

People First Language

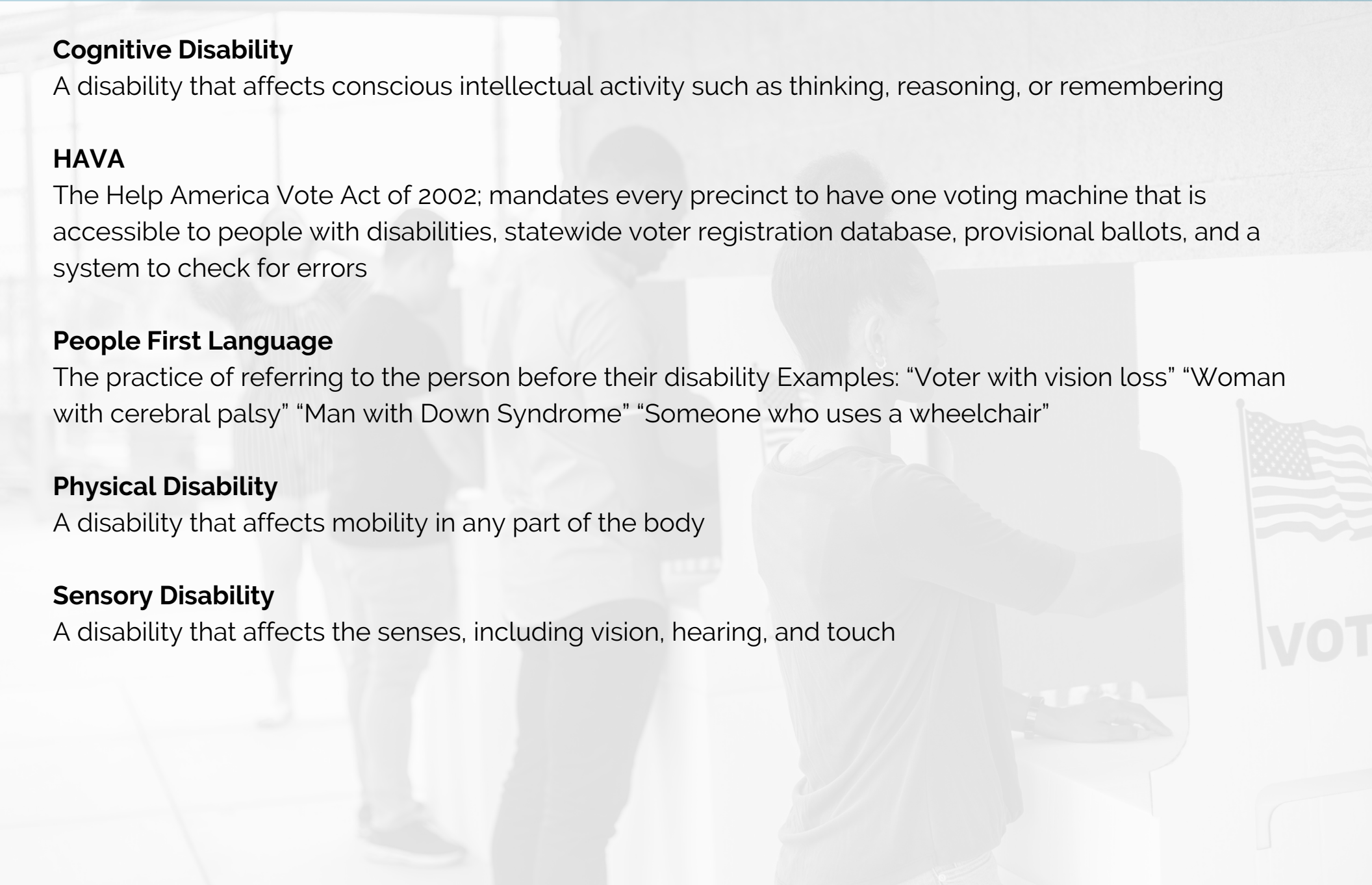
The practice of referring to the person before their disability Examples: "Voter with vision loss" "Woman with cerebral palsy" "Man with Down Syndrome" "Someone who uses a wheelchair"

Physical Disability

A disability that affects mobility in any part of the body

Sensory Disability

A disability that affects the senses, including vision, hearing, and touch





Arkansas State Capitol Building, Little Rock



The county boards of election commissioners shall provide voting locations that are accessible to voters with disabilities and shall provide reasonable and adequate methods whereby voters with disabilities may personally and secretly execute their ballots at the polling places.

[Arkansas Code Annotated § 7-5-311(a)]

Poll Worker Resources

Arkansas Secretary of State; Elections Division

www.sos.arkansas.gov

800-482-1127

Arkansas State Board of Election Commissioners

www.arkansas.gov/sbec

800-411-6996

American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas

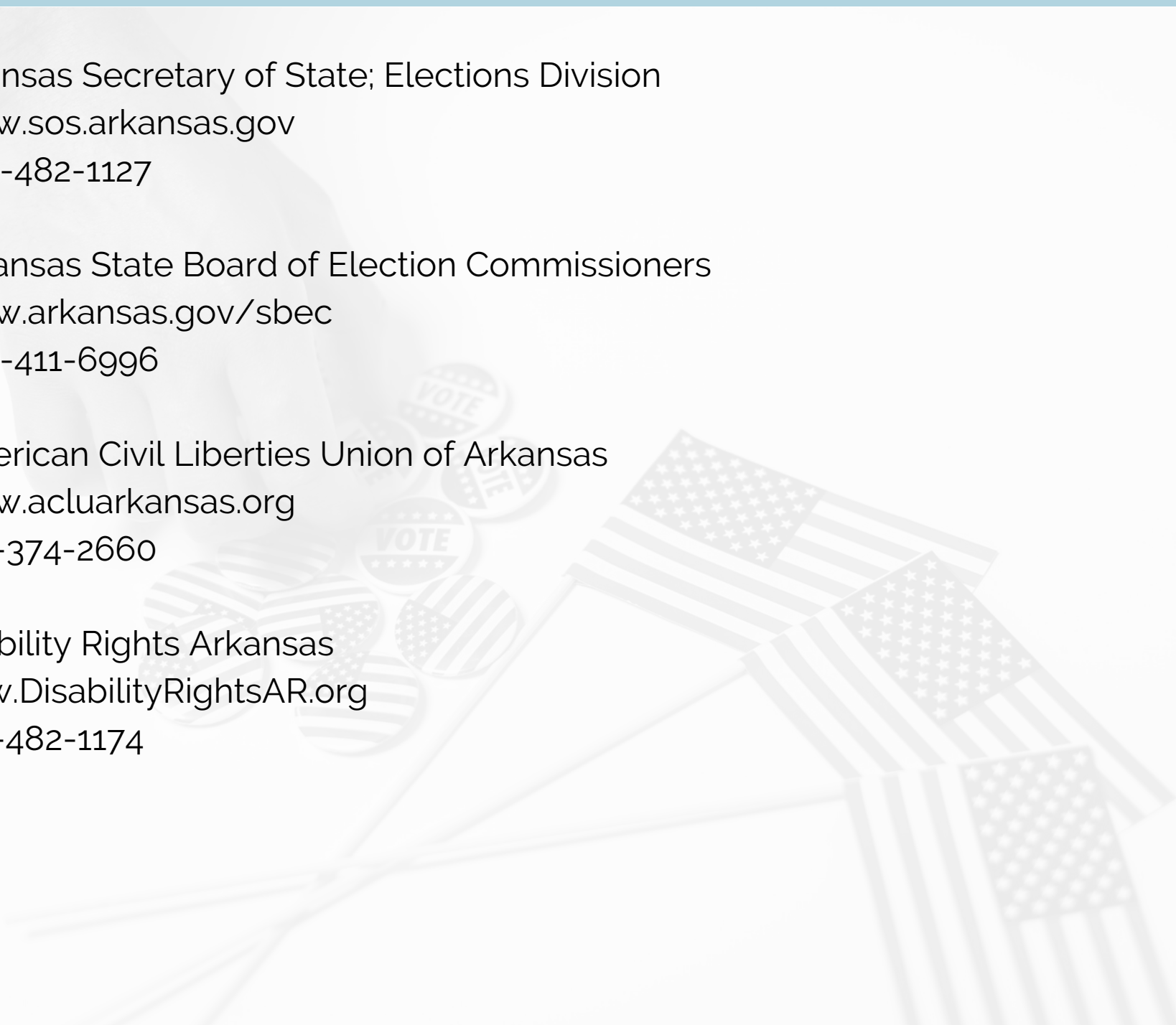
www.acluarkansas.org

501-374-2660

Disability Rights Arkansas

www.DisabilityRightsAR.org

800-482-1174





Thank you.

You make a difference when you
help Arkansas vote.



400 W. Capitol Avenue #1200
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
(501) 296-1775
(800) 482-1174

www.DisabilityRightsAR.org