



Colorado's Protection & Advocacy System

Testimony Regarding HB09-1115

Faith Gross, representing The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People, Colorado's designated Protection and Advocacy System. I coordinate the statewide voting access program for people with disabilities authorized and funded under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). In addition to working in partnership with the Secretary of State and county clerks and their staffs on accessibility issues, our priority is outreach and voter registration for people with disabilities and older people.

We are concerned that limiting acceptable forms of ID when registering to vote and voting will create significant barriers to participation by some people with disabilities including many seniors.

A great deal of our voter registration and education outreach takes place at long term care facilities, and apartment buildings for seniors and people with disabilities, as well as at events hosted by disability service providers.

In 2008 The Legal Center registered 219 people, primarily at assisted living facilities, and community-based disability service organizations. Of these, 65 did not have either a Colorado driver's license or photo ID, approximately 30%.

50% of the residents at Ft. Logan Mental health Institute and 38% of assisted living facility residents did not have a form photo ID listed in this bill.

We also found that some people may have a driver's license or CO issued photo ID, but not have it available for voter registration. It is not unusual for a resident of an assisted living or nursing home facility to have her ID with a relative, sometimes in another county. During one voter registration activity at an assisted living facility, a former police officer, severely injured in the line of duty, was unable to register because his ID was at his parents' home in another county. Fortunately, they were visiting him that day and I was able to give them a form that he could mail in himself with the required information.

The ID cards of residents of Ft. Logan are often locked in staff offices.

Congress intended for our program to increase election participation by Americans with disabilities. The consequences of restricting acceptable voter identification to photo ID will in fact, limit participation by some of our most vulnerable citizens.

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