



**The Arc**<sup>™</sup>

Pennsylvania

Fall 2022 - Volume XXIII, Issue 2

# Pennsylvania Message

## VOTING AND DISABILITY IN PENNSYLVANIA FROM DISABILITY RIGHTS PA

Submitted by Jennifer Garman, Director of Government Affairs, Disability Rights PA

**V**oting is a fundamental right, privilege, and duty. It is also a key means to make your voice heard. For people with disabilities, voting is important to ensure that elected officials work to protect and advance the rights and interests of the disability community. The General Election will be held in Pennsylvania on November 8, 2022.

You cannot vote in Pennsylvania unless you are registered to vote. You can register to vote:

- Online at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov)
- At your County Board of Elections office
- At many state and local government offices

You must register to vote by October 24, 2022 to vote in the General Election.

### Voting In Person

If you are registered to vote, you can vote in person at your assigned polling place. If you are a first-time voter or are voting for the first time at a new polling place, you will need to show identification. Some forms of photo identification accepted include:

- Pennsylvania driver's license or PennDOT ID card
- ID issued by any Commonwealth agency
- ID issued by the U.S. Government
- U.S. passport
- U.S. Armed Forces ID

**“My voice matters. I want them (elected officials/candidates) to know I vote. I care about my services and funding, and I watch and vote. I want to help people who care about me.” — Harper, self-advocate**

- Student ID
- Employee ID

If you don't have a photo identification, you could bring a utility bill, bank statement or other similar document in your name and that includes your address. More information about accepted identification is available at [vote.pa.gov](https://vote.pa.gov).

### Right to Assistance for In Person Voting

If you need assistance to cast your ballot at your polling place due to your disability, you can have someone assist you to vote. You can be assisted by:

- A relative
- Friend
- Neighbor
- Aide
- Another voter



# Presidents' Message Jessica Capitani & Sara Wolff



For this issue of the PA Message, we – Jessica Capitani, Board President and Sara Wolff, Assistant President – have decided to write together. The theme of this issue, voting and voting rights, is very important to both of us.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States and yet it seems that at election time the disability vote is overlooked in multiple ways, from voting accessibility to believing that candidates will prioritize issues that are important to people with disabilities. Exercising the right to vote is

one of the best ways we have to ensure that we are represented by leaders who will protect and improve disability rights.

As a self advocate, Sara encourages others with disabilities to not get distracted or discouraged by political fighting between candidates and to focus on issues that matter to their lives. She has been voting for 21 years and has voted both in person and by mail.

As a mother to a child with a disability, Jessica feels that the people we are electing now will be the ones crafting legislation that may most

influence her son's future. She has also been taking her son to the polls with her in recent years so that he will be prepared for the quickly approaching day when he is old enough to vote for himself.

Voting is a crucial way to support what matters most to you.

You will be proud to be part of the election process and no matter your identity as someone with a disability, or a parent or family member, or ally, we strongly encourage everyone to let your voice be heard with your vote!

## UPCOMING ARC OF PA PROGRAMS AND TRAINING

Please help us spread the word about upcoming Arc of Pennsylvania programs and trainings! More information about these efforts are on our website at [TheArcPA.org](http://TheArcPA.org).

### Making Employment Work

This three-day course prepares attendees to learn about and provide best practices in Supported Employment or Community Participation services. With attendance at the course, completed homework assignments and additional self-paced coursework, individuals can earn the basic ACRE certificate.

**UPCOMING DATES:**  
**November 14 – 16, 2022;**  
**December 12 – 14, 2022;**  
**and January 9 – 11, 2023**

### Discovery

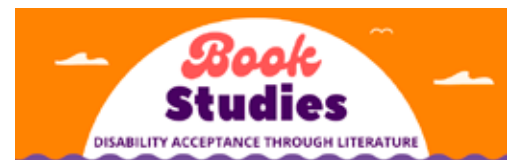
The goal of Discovery training is to develop skills in determining and documenting the personal contributions, interests, and conditions for success of an individual who experiences significant impact of a disability, using a process that is qualitative, descriptive, and non-evaluative. The Discovery process sets the stage for customized employment for the individual. Certification is available with additional course work

**UPCOMING DATES:**  
**January 16 – 18, 2023**



For ages 10 and over and designed for ALL learners, the free and fun virtual hangout is facilitated by our trained inclusion specialists. Themes change each month and have included topics like: "Friends: What makes a Good One?" and "What is Finding my Voice? (And How Do I Find It?)" Themes center on social skills, self-expression, and self-awareness

**UPCOMING DATES:**  
**Wed. Nov 16, 4:30 – 5:30 pm**  
**Wed. December 21, 4:30 – 5:30 pm**



### Book Studies Disability Acceptance Through Literature

Groupings of similar age children meet with our expert facilitators for a virtual book study. Books are selected by our facilitators and offer opportunities to learn about the many aspects of disability through the perspective of school age protagonists. Discussions center on understanding, acceptance, presuming competence, and friendship. When students enroll, we send them the book and an activity pack.

**More dates to be announced soon!**



# Executive Director's Message Sherri Landis



Mid-terms. When hearing this word, some of us might think of exams that we took while we attended school. But the current reason you are no doubt hearing this term a lot in recent months is that the election of U.S. Congressional Representatives; top state officials, such as the Governor of Pennsylvania; a U.S. Senate seat; and those in the PA General Assembly will be determined by the upcoming "mid-term" election on November 8th.

As the Executive Director of Pennsylvania's largest disability organization, we are focused on understanding where candidates stand on the critical disability issues of these times. We also seek to assure that individuals, families, community members, and professionals who keep disability issues on top of their list of priorities, understand where candidates stand on these issues as well.

Traditionally, in this issue of the PA Message issue, we would provide candidate responses to questions we posed on important disability issues. However, candidates this election have shifted away from responding to the survey questions sent to their campaigns. Our organization pivoted in response and continues to educate and speak out to candidates about the critical issues people with IDD and their families face. Issues such as:

- The direct support professional funding crisis
- Increased rates for Early Intervention professionals
- Increasing the number of people with disabilities gainfully employed
- Including those with disabilities in policymaking at the state and federal levels
- Healthcare equity, and more!

The Arc of PA works to support our constituents to get involved, use their voices, and especially vote. All candidates for all public offices need to know that disability issues matter to a broad number of their constituents!

In the lead-up to voting day, we encourage you to act. For example, you can attend or view candidates' debates or forums. You can call candidates' offices to further discuss any concerns you have for disability issues locally, in Pennsylvania, and the United States. Some may wish to canvas or hand out material for a candidate. Perhaps you can assist someone to register to vote, getting to the polls or filling in their form for an absentee or mail-in ballot. Contact your local Arc chapter to learn if there are actions planned.

Do you or anyone you know have difficulty understanding voting rights for people with disabilities? Please see the resources and the article in this newsletter from Disability Rights Pennsylvania that describes these rights.

Together, with our large and vibrant advocacy network, we can work to assure that the needs, interests, and issues important to the disability community are front and center in this important election and that our voices are heard! It is up to each one of us!

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### The Arc Staff

Sherri Landis, Executive Director

*Achieve with us.*

To receive assistance, you should note the need for assistance on your voter registration form. This will ensure that the information will be included at your polling location.

If you did not indicate a need for assistance on your voter registration form, you can complete a "Declaration of Need of Assistance" form at the polling place stating:

- Your name and address
- The name and address of the person assisting you
- The reason for assistance

### What to Do if Your Polling Place is Inaccessible

A person with a disability probably wants to make sure that their polling place is accessible before Election Day. To find out the location of your polling place and whether it is accessible, you can visit [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov) or contact your County Board of Elections. For contact information for your County Boards of Election call 1-877-868-3772.

If your polling place is not accessible and you want to vote in person, you should also consider working with your County Board of Elections to find a new polling place for your division by proposing some alternatives. You can also contact the Department of State to complain about the inaccessibility of your polling place at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov).

You can find more information on your rights from Disability Rights PA in its publication Disability Voting Issues: Access, Assistance, and Accommodations. The publication is available for free on [DisabilityRightsPA.org](https://DisabilityRightsPA.org).

“The reason why it’s important for people with disabilities to vote is so we can try to increase the DSP wages. There are many other issues, but this is a very important issue for me.”

— Michael, self-advocate

### Voting By Mail

Any qualified registered voter in Pennsylvania can now vote by mail. A mail-in ballot does not require providing a reason. To ensure you apply for a mail-in ballot, rather than an absentee ballot, be sure to answer “no” to the third question, which asks “Are you applying for a ballot for the upcoming election because you cannot appear at your polling place due to an illness or physical disability?” If you answer “yes” to this question, the system will automatically lead you to the absentee ballot application. You can apply to request a mail-in ballot online at [vote.pa.gov](https://vote.pa.gov) or by completing a mail in form.

The deadline to request a mail in ballot is 5 pm on November 1, 2022. The ballot must be completed and received by your County Board of Elections by 8 pm on November 8th, 2022 to be counted. This means that you should mail or deliver it well in advance of election day to ensure it gets to the County Board

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**MEET THE CANDIDATES SERIES**

The Arc of PA's pre-recorded Q & As from candidates running for an open seat in the 2022 general election.

The interviews focus on key issues that affect the disability community.

**GO TO:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/ArcofPA-YouTube>

**VOTE YOUR VOICE**

The Arc of PA  
Voter & Voting Resources Webpage

<https://thearcpa.org/vote-2022/>

of Elections in time.

### Right to Assistance in Picking Up or Returning Your Mail-In Ballot

If you have a disability that prevents you from applying in person for your mail ballot or delivering your mail ballot, you may designate an agent to deliver your ballot materials for you. You must designate an agent using a special form available at [VotesPA.com](http://VotesPA.com).

### Can election officials bar a person from voting because they deem them not competent to vote or understand the ballot?

No. Pennsylvania has no voting competence laws. Election officials and poll workers cannot question the ability of a voter with an intellectual disability, mental illness, brain injury, dementia, or other cognitive limits and certainly may not bar them from exercising their right to vote.

Nevertheless, out of ignorance or paternalism, some election officials or poll workers may try to discourage such individuals from voting or even try to bar them from doing so. If a person with a disability encounters such an obstacle, he or she can file a complaint by contacting 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772) or fill in the online complaint form at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](http://pavoterservices.pa.gov).

### How can Disability Rights Pennsylvania help me with voting issues before the Election?

If you encounter voting obstacles – such as, inaccessible polling places, inaccessible voting machines, refusal to allow

“Exercising the right to vote is one of the best ways we have to ensure that we are represented by leaders who will protect and improve disability rights.”

— Sara, self-advocate

assisted voting, refusal to provide reasonable accommodations or effective communication, barring or intimidating voters due to disability – you should contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania at 1-800-692-7443 x400.

### Election Day Hotline

On November 8th, 2022, Disability Rights PA is participating in the Election Protection hotline and assisting with calls. Please call 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683). You can find more voting materials on our Election 2022 website: <https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/election2022/>



In Touch is an electronic newsletter that is emailed every two weeks. It shares the most up to date information about legislative and governmental actions, resources, and events. If you'd like to receive it, email [info@thearcpa.org](mailto:info@thearcpa.org).

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR VOTING RIGHTS & PENNSYLVANIA'S RULES WEBINAR SERIES

Part 1: Self-Advocate Focus  
Part 2: Caregiver & Direct Support Professional Focus



<https://tinyurl.com/ArcofPA-YouTube>

# 2022 GENERAL ELECTION – IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**The General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 8, 2020. In Pennsylvania, the deadline to register to vote in the 2020 General Election is October 24, 2022. The deadline to Request a Mail-In or Absentee Ballot is November 1, 2022, by 5:00 PM ET.**

All individuals should create a voting plan whether they are voting in person or by a mail-in or absentee ballot. You want to check your voter registration. Plan if you need assistance with voting tasks. And if you do need assistance, have multiple people ready and able to help you with your voting tasks.

## Register to Vote in Pennsylvania

You can register to vote online, by mail, or at several government agencies, including PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT). For more information on how to register to vote, visit [Vote.pa.gov](http://Vote.pa.gov).

## Mail-in and Absentee Ballots

For individuals planning to vote by mail-in ballots, you must apply for a mail in ballot either online, in-person at a county election office, or request a paper application and apply by mail. Voted mail-in or absentee ballots must be received by your county election office by 8:00 PM – a postmark is not enough. To request a Mail-In or Absentee Ballot online go to [Pavoterservices.pa.gov](http://Pavoterservices.pa.gov).

## Designated Agent

Individuals with IDD can use a “designated agent” to pick up or drop off their mail-in ballot or absentee ballot. To designate an agent, a person needs to complete the designated agent form which is provided by the Department of State. Keep a copy of your designated agent form.

The designated agent needs to bring the completed form along with them, either when they’re picking up or dropping off a person’s mail-in or absentee ballot.

Anyone can be a designated agent, but an agent cannot assist more than one voter unless voters share a “household”. The Department of State says that a “household” does not include long-term care facilities and intermediate care facilities. While community homes such as group homes are NOT specifically addressed in the Department of State Guidance, it is recommended to be cautious and only have one designated agent per voter living in a group home.

You can download the designated Agent form from [Vote.pa.gov](http://Vote.pa.gov).

## Voting in Person

For individuals planning to vote in person, get ready and confirm

## Voter resources at a glance:

General information: [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)

Register to vote, find polling location:  
[pavoterservices.pa.gov](http://pavoterservices.pa.gov)

Designate an agent for special assistance:  
[VotesPA.com](http://VotesPA.com)

Election Day Hotline:

1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)

[www.disabilityrightspa.org/election2022](http://www.disabilityrightspa.org/election2022)

your polling place. You can look up your polling place online at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](http://pavoterservices.pa.gov). You can find out what polling places are accessible and have accessible voting machines at [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov). If you arrive at your polling location and it is inaccessible, ask for the judge of elections. If the judge of elections is unable to help, they can contact the county board of elections.








If you have an emergency and are unable to vote in person as you planned, you may still be able to get a ballot after the deadline which is called an emergency ballot. [Vote.pa.gov](http://Vote.pa.gov) website can tell you more about Emergency Ballots.

**Note:** We have created a webpage for you to easily locate the resources in this article and in the newsletter at: [Thearcpa.org/vote-2022/](http://Thearcpa.org/vote-2022/)

“ I vote because I want to choose who best represents me in government and will do what is best for me and my community and our country.” — Zach, self-advocate

# VOTING DAY TOOLKIT

Take this list with you to your voting location so you have important information nearby.

If this happens	What should you do?
<p>The poll worker asks you for ID or identification.</p>	<p>Show a photo ID like a drivers license, state photo ID, or passport.</p> 
<p>You need assistance to vote and brought someone to help you.</p> <p>(You can be assisted by a relative, friend, neighbor, aide, or another voter. You cannot be assisted by a judge of elections, a union representative, or your employer.)</p>	<p>If you need help voting and did not say so when you registered to vote, you can ask the poll worker for a form called "Declaration of Need of Assistance".</p>  <p>You need to fill in the form and write the helper's name, address, and why you need help. You will sign the form with your name</p> 
<p>A poll worker does not want to let you vote because you have a disability.</p>	<p>If you are registered to vote, the poll worker can't tell you that you can't vote.</p> <p>Ask to speak to the Election Supervisor. Tell the supervisor that you are a registered voter and have the right to vote.</p>  <p>If they still say you can't vote, call the Election Protection Hotline: 1-866-687-8683</p> 
<p>If you had a bad experience when you went to your voting place, you can file a complaint. In the complaint, you can tell people what happened to you when you went to vote.</p>	<p>The state has a hotline you can call and give your complaint. The phone number is: 1-877-868-3772</p>  <p>You can also file a complaint online at:</p> <p><a href="https://www.vote.pa.gov/">https://www.vote.pa.gov/</a></p> 



*Pennsylvania*

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The Arc of Pennsylvania is affiliated with The Arc of the United States. We have 30 local chapters serving 50 counties and over 12,000 members.



# Your Voice Matters

The Arc of Pennsylvania  
1007 Mumma Road, Suite 100, Lemoyne, PA, 17043.  
717-234-2621 [www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org)

## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Arc of Pennsylvania promotes the human rights of people with intellectual and development disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.*