

Subject: AFB (Alternate Format Ballot)

Purpose: The AFB is an alternate format ballot that provides accessibility, via technology, to a printed paper ballot for voters' with disabilities.

Background: The AFB was conceived and developed as a result of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) that was passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002. Title III, Section 301 (3) requires states to provide: "a voting system that shall be accessible for individuals with disabilities, including nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters."

Oregon is a vote by mail state. That is, every registered voter receives his/her ballot in the mail. Unlike a state with polling places scattered throughout the many voting jurisdictions, the voter in Oregon does not go to the ballot, rather, the ballot goes to the voter. This allows voters in Oregon to vote from the comfort and privacy of their own home or any other place of their choosing.

For some people with disabilities, vote by mail has improved accessibility to the voting process. However, people with disabilities who cannot, for whatever reason, access printed material or do not possess the fine motor skills required to mark a printed ballot, are unable to access the current voting system without assistance.

Therefore, in order for Oregon to meet Title III, Section 301 (3) of HAVA, the task has been to find a voting system that allows people with disabilities who are unable to access the current voting system to be able to receive, mark and return a paper ballot from home.

Solution: People with disabilities unable to access, create or otherwise interact with printed materials often use assistive technology to bridge whatever barrier is present. The AFB capitalizes on this assistive technology in order to provide an alternate format ballot. The AFB is accessed, marked, printed and returned using whatever assistive technology is available to the voter.

What it is: The AFB is created using the same data that is used to create the printed ballots. The data is imported from the Oregon Centralized

Voter Registration System Election Module and, using a conversion application, is converted to HTML. The AFB:

- Is verified using W3C standards to ensure the HTML coding is accurate for proper accessibility
- Is designed using Universal Design methodology
- Is designed to open in the most popular web browser applications including, but not limited to, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera, Netscape, and Safari
- Is non-proprietary and works with many different screen readers including both commercial and free screen readers (i.e. JAWS, WindowEyes, Thunder)
- Requires that the end user have access to, at minimum, the following:
 - A computer
 - Appropriate assistive technology application(s) installed as well as any required assistive devices required by the user
 - A web browser application
 - A working printer
- Can be sent to the voter via email, on a Computer Disc or Floppy Disc
- Uses check boxes to make selections on the ballot
- Allows for a write in vote using text boxes
- Permits the voter to verify, in a private and independent manner, the votes selected before the ballot is cast and counted
- Provides the voter with an opportunity to change the ballot or correct any error
- Notifies the voter that they have selected more than one candidate for a single office race
- Notifies the voter that an overvote will not count
- Is a permanent record
- Is duplicated to an optical scan ballot by the county election board for tabulation but the printed AFB is the ballot of record
- Requires the voter to have their signature verification envelope

What it isn't: The AFB does not:

- Require connection to the internet
- Store any votes
- Tabulate any votes
- Require a screen reader, screen magnification application or any other specific assistive technology to work properly. Any voter with access to a computer, web browser and printer can access the AFB. Voters with disabilities who need assistive technology in order to access the AFB are required to have that technology installed or available if voting from home or can use the equipment set up at each county elections office. They must also know how to properly use the assistive technology on the computer they are using to access the ballot

Added

Benefits:

The AFB also provides quick access to every ballot style in the state for:

- Military and overseas voters (via email)
- Out of state voters (via email)
- Voters that arrive at an election office and need a ballot from another county where they are currently registered (printing in county office)

Polling

Place Voting: The State plans to contract with a third party vendor to develop, configure (both hardware and software), and install at least one Accessible Computer Station in each election office for voters with disabilities that arrive in the office to vote. The contracted vendor will also provide training to election officials in each county on how to use the ACS. The ACS will include, at minimum, a computer, printer, accessible keyboard, sip-puff module, switches with interface, scanner, screen magnification application, and screen reader application. Counties will also have at least one portable ACS. This will allow bi-partisan voting assistance teams to transport the ACS to voters that are homebound, have transportation barriers, or who may not have access to the necessary technology.

Accessible Voting News

The Oregon Secretary of State and the Elections Division are committed to making voting more accessible to people with disabilities. The goal is to provide the opportunity for voters in Oregon to vote as privately and independently as possible. A new voting tool that is now available to persons with disabilities is the Alternate Format Ballot (AFB).

One of the many exciting things about the Alternate Format Ballot is that it allows voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently at home if they have, or have access to, a computer with a web browser and a printer.

How does it work? The Alternate Format Ballot is an electronic document that opens in a web browser, such as Internet Explorer or Firefox. Once received, the voter opens the instructions and reads through them carefully. After reading the instructions the voter opens the ballot in the web browser and works through the ballot using the keystrokes outlined in the instructions. The ballot uses check boxes and text boxes to allow the voter to make their desired choices.

When the ballot is completed the voter can review their selections and make any needed corrections. Once the voter is sure the ballot is marked correctly the ballot is printed.

What if I don't have, or have access to, the necessary equipment? Every county elections office will have at least two accessible computer stations. One permanent station located at the office and one portable station that can be taken out of the office. Voters who do not have access to a computer can go to an elections office and vote privately and independently using the AFB. The portable station will allow a voter to request to vote the Alternate Format Ballot at a location agreed upon by the voter and the county elections officials.

Does the AFB work with all assistive technology? The Alternate Format Ballot is designed to work with many different types of assistive technology: Screen readers, sip - puff devices, screen enlargers, Braille displays, switches, joy sticks, and other alternative input devices. While it may not work with everything it has been designed to work with as many things as possible.

How do I get it? First remember that you must be registered to vote in order to obtain the AFB. Registered voters can request the Alternate Format Ballot from your county elections office. The AFB can be e-mailed directly to you or it can be sent by regular mail on a CD. The ballot will arrive with additional electronic text documents that will include step-by-step instructions about how to complete and return it.

Important note! After you mark and print the Alternate Format Ballot, you will need to return it in the secrecy and signature envelopes included in the

standard print ballot package sent to you by your county elections office. Your print ballot package is mailed approximately 14 -18 days before Election Day. Even if you vote at one of the accessible stations provided by the county you will need to bring your print voting packet with you. You will use the secrecy and signature envelopes to cast your ballot after voting.

Testimonials: "I voted privately and independently for the first time in my life last year using the Alternate format Ballot," said Angel Hale, Salem resident and business owner, "I was able to take my time, vote in the comfort of my own home, and make my selections using a tool I use every single day—my computer with JAWS software. It was such a liberating and empowering experience! If you can't mark a printed ballot without assistance right now, you will absolutely want to take a look at this new voting tool."

Jeanne-Marie, a Eugene resident, stated, "I can tell you that having a secret ballot was one of the most exhilarating moments of my life. It's a different way to vote and it's a huge change, and very well worth it."

The Alternate Format Ballot will be available to voters in Oregon beginning with the May 2008 Primary Election. Contact your County Elections Office to request the Alternate Format Ballot for the Primary Election.

For more information about the Alternate Format Ballot call Gene Newton at 503-986-2352 or dial the toll free elections information line at 1-866-ORE-VOTES. That's 1-866-673-8683.

If you have a disability and need help completing your ballot or registering to vote you can request assistance. Call your local county elections office or dial the toll free elections information line at 1-866-ORE-VOTES. That's 1-866-673-8683.

