

May 7, 2008

**Government Accountability Office (GAO) Study:
Voting Access for Voters with Disabilities and the Elderly- Election 2008**

Background / Key Questions:

As election 2008 nears, concerns remain about voting access for those with disabilities, who are disproportionately older adults. While the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 and state/local efforts may address these issues, little is known about the extent to which they have improved accessibility. Questions: 1) What proportion of polling places have features that might facilitate or impede voting access for persons with disabilities compared to our findings in 2000? 2) What state provisions are in place to regulate voting at long term care facilities? 3) What are promising local practices to ensure voting access for long term care residents while protecting against fraud and undue influence? 4) What steps has the Department of Justice taken to enforce HAVA's voting access provisions?

Scope and Methodology:

To compare the proportion of polling places with features potentially facilitating or impeding voting access to our 2000 findings, we will visit a random sample of polling places on or before election day--November 4, 2008--to take measurements, make observations, and interview local officials. We will modify the data collection instrument GAO used in 2000 to meet engagement needs. To identify state provisions required for long term care residents' voting, we will develop a strategy to survey/interview state election officials. To identify promising practices, we will work with long term care experts and others to develop a strategy. During design, we will visit one state holding a primary election to test our overall data collection methodology. To identify Justice's efforts to enforce HAVA's access requirements, we will interview Justice officials and obtain relevant documentation.

Requesting Committees:

- Senate Special Committee on Aging
- Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Contact Information:

- Analyst-In-Charge, Laura Heald, 202-512-8701 (phone), 202-512-5804 (fax), healdl@gao.gov
- Analyst, Katherine Bowman, 202-512-2813 (phone), 202-512-5804 (fax), bowmank@gao.gov