



# Get Out The **VOTE** 2013!

A voting and election guide  
for New Jersey citizens with disabilities and their families



Voting gives you the opportunity to make a choice and advocate for change. This year, New Jersey citizens will elect the state's next Governor and all 120 of New Jersey's State Legislators (40 State Senators, and 80 State Assemblypersons). This **Get Out the VOTE 2013!** Guide is a tool to help you learn more about the voting process, how to vote and about who will appear on this year's ballot. It is important to have information about the candidates and the process before you vote. Among other things, elected officials shape policy and make decisions about health care, education, justice and civil rights.

Whether you are a self-advocate or you care for a loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability, please use this Guide and cast your vote in person or submit a vote by mail before the polls close on **November 5, 2013**.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who can vote?

To vote you must be **(1) a citizen of the United States, and (2) at least 18 years old, and (3) registered to vote**. You cannot vote if you are in jail, on parole or on probation. You must also be able to understand what it means to vote. Only a judge can declare that an individual lacks the capacity to vote. **It is not legal to deny someone the right to vote based on the fact that he or she has a legal guardian**. It is not legal to deny someone the right to vote based on the fact that he or she has an intellectual or other disability. It is not legal to deny someone the right to vote based on the fact that he or she lives in an institution, developmental center or group home. It is not legal to deny someone the right to vote based on the fact that he or she receives services or supports related to having a disability.

### How can I register to vote?

Complete a **Voter Registration Application** (which can be printed from the New Jersey Division of Elections web site: [www.state.nj.us/state/elections](http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections)). You can also register to vote in person at the Office of the County Commissioner of Registration. Visit <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-local-officials.html> to find your county clerk. You must bring proof that you live in your county when you register to vote (*it is also a good idea to bring proof when you vote on Election Day*). Proof can include a driver's license; student ID; government issued ID; or a document with your name and address on it such as a bank statement or government issued check like a Social Security check. **You must register to vote by October 15, 2013.**

### When and Where do I vote?

Voting takes place on Election Day, which this year is **Tuesday, November 5, 2013**. Polling places (the place where you go to cast your vote) open at 6 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. Polling places are usually set up at schools, libraries or firehouses in your town. Registered **voters are assigned a specific location to vote**. To find out if you are registered, where your polling place is, and whether your polling place is accessible (ADA compliant), visit the New Jersey Division of Elections website at [www.state.nj.us/state/elections](http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections).

### Can I vote by mail?

**YES!** Anyone can vote by mail. You do not need a special reason to vote by mail. Download a vote by mail application at [http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/mail-in\\_doe.html](http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/mail-in_doe.html) (be sure to download the application for your county!) You can also call the New Jersey Division of Elections, at 609-292-0034, and request an application be mailed to you. **You must apply for a vote by mail ballot by Oct. 29, 2013.** Complete and return your ballot to the Office of the Board of Elections in your county before the polls close at 8 p.m. on Election Day, November 5, 2013.

### Are polling places accessible for people with disabilities?

One accessible polling machine adapted for audio must be available at every polling place to allow voters with a visual impairment to verify and cast their votes in private and without assistance. Polling places should be **integrated settings**, meaning that all people (with and without disabilities) should vote together in the same space. People with disabilities have the right (1) to **reasonable accommodations** that make it possible for them to vote, and (b) to use **auxiliary aids** (such as Assisted Listening equipment, registration forms in Braille and large print, ramps to access the polling area) to ensure that communication is effective. You can also either (a) ask a friend, family member or staff member to enter the booth with you, or (b) **ask for help from poll workers** at your polling place on Election Day. If you have a problem on Election Day, you can contact **Disability Rights New Jersey** at **800-922-7233**.

## Who are the candidates?

In addition to the Governor's race, New Jersey citizens will vote for one Senator and two Assemblypersons. To determine who currently represents you, and then who will be on your ballot, you must first know what district you live in. To find a map divided by district, or to search for your district based on the town where you live, visit [www.njleg.org](http://www.njleg.org). Once you know your district, you can find out who will be on the ballot by visiting <http://nj.gov/state/elections/election-information-archive-2013.html#3>.

## How do I find out more about the candidates?

Once you know who your candidates are, it is important to learn as much as you can about them. For a candidate who already holds office, you can learn about their past voting record on disability-related legislation, any legislation they may have sponsored or co-sponsored affecting the disability community, and what their past positions have been on budgetary initiatives affecting the disability community. The same can be done for the opponent in whatever law-making capacity s/he has had. Many candidates will have a website or Facebook page with information on their platform (how they feel about the issues). Staff members in candidate offices are also typically happy to answer any questions you might have.

▶ Additionally, The Arc of New Jersey submitted a brief questionnaire to each of the gubernatorial candidates. Instead of specific responses to the questions posed, Governor Chris Christie provided a statement outlining his public record and accomplishments regarding issues of concern to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Senator Barbara Buono provided specific responses to each of the three questions posed. **Gov. Christie's statement and Sen. Buono's response are both included here in the GOTV guide, in alphabetical order.**

## BALLOT QUESTIONS

In addition to voting for a candidate, New Jersey citizens will also be asked to weigh in on two ballot questions this November. Below are the two questions that you can review ahead of time. Learning more about them now will help you decide how you want to vote on Election Day.

**(1) Do you approve of amending the Constitution to allow veterans' organizations to use money collected from existing games of chance to support their organizations?** This amendment to the Constitution would allow veterans' organizations to use the money collected from existing games of chance (such as bingo, lotto or raffles) to support their organizations. At present, the Constitution allows this money to be used only for educational, charitable, patriotic, religious or public-spirited purposes. Currently, only senior citizen groups may use the money they collect from existing games of chance to support their groups.

**(2) Do you approve of amending the State Constitution to set a State minimum wage rate of at least \$8.25 per hour?** The amendment also requires annual increases in that rate if there are annual increases in the cost of living. This amendment to the State Constitution sets the State minimum wage at the level in effect under current law, or \$8.25 per hour, whichever is more. Cost of living increases would be added each year. Also, if the federal minimum wage rate is raised above the State rate, the State rate would be raised to match the federal rate. Future cost of living increases then would be added to that raised rate.

## SPECIAL ELECTION 2013

In addition to the General Election on November 5, New Jersey citizens will also elect a new **U.S. Senator** on Wednesday, October 16. The candidates are Republican Steve Lonegan and Democrat Cory Booker. To learn more about the candidates and where they stand on disability issues, visit their web sites or call their campaign offices.

**Steve Lonegan:** <http://www.loneganforsenate.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/LoneganforSenate>, or 201-465-4751

**Cory Booker:** <http://www.corybooker.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/corybooker>, or 973-623-0692



## Senator Barbara Buono

*Democratic candidate for New Jersey Governor*

**The Arc:** *What will you do to promote community inclusion and to welcome individuals with intellectual and development disabilities into all aspects of society?*

**Sen. Buono:** New Jerseyans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) deserve the same opportunities, dignity, and respect as their friends and neighbors. As governor, I will work to make sure our State actively promotes the inclusion of individuals with I/DD at all stages and in all segments of life. That effort begins with equipping our public schools with qualified educators and faculty that can tend to the particular needs of students with I/DD, reducing the need for them to attend separate schools. As these students graduate, we must empower them with the transitional training needed to secure employment in the 21st century economy. I led on this issue when I sponsored legislation in 2004 to provide tax credits to businesses providing employment to individuals with disabilities at sheltered workshops.

When New Jerseyans with I/DD enter adulthood, they deserve options to make it easier to live in and move throughout the community. To that end, we must seek to expand affordable living spaces, as well as efficient and affordable public transportation. As governor, I will pursue commonsense measures to expand New Jersey's affordable living spaces by converting foreclosed properties into affordable homes. In addition, I will establish a task force to evaluate how we can expand transportation routes for people with disabilities, providing them with safe and efficient means to increase their mobility.

And finally, I will work to foster a greater understanding of New Jerseyans with I/DD within the larger community by promoting "R-Word: Spread the Word to End the Word" and other public awareness campaigns to encourage greater inclusion.

**The Arc:** *Working age people with disabilities are among the most unemployed and underemployed members of our society. As an Employment First State, what will you do to increase the number of opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the world of employment?*

**Sen. Buono:** Adults with I/DD have valuable skills to contribute to New Jersey's workforce and will be key to building an economy built to last. As governor, ensuring that people with disabilities can find good-paying jobs will be part of my broader workforce development strategy. This means supporting businesses that employ people with disabilities by making sure they have a designated point of contact in State government to help them understand and accommodate the particular needs of employees with I/DD. It means that government should set an example for the rest of the State by reviewing its policies annually to ensure they provide adequate supports and opportunities for public servants with disabilities. And it means expanding the pipeline of people with disabilities entering the workforce by ensuring our educational system makes appropriate accommodations for those students from preschool through college.

**The Arc:** *In 2013, the responsibility of serving children with intellectual and development disabilities was shifted from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Children and Families. Disability advocates are concerned that there is not enough funding to meet the need for family support services which are critical for these children and their families. What would you do to address the issue?*

**Sen. Buono:** As we transfer responsibilities for children with I/DD to the Department of Children and Families, we must not forget that family members are the most important people to those children's health and well-being. Family support services help make it easier for families to care for children with developmental disabilities, enhancing both their quality of life and the child's. As governor, I will closely monitor the department reorganization, and I will work to expand funding resources to preserve family support services if necessary.

# **Governor Chris Christie**

*Republican candidate for New Jersey Governor*



As has been evidenced over the past three and a half years, Governor Chris Christie has established a strong record and sparked an important public discourse about how we deliver services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families and moving our state away from its shameful history of institutionalization.

Under Governor Christie's leadership, New Jersey has become a national leader for identifying, diagnosing, and caring for children with autism, which impacts about 1 in 50 children across the Garden State and their families. In June 2012, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) named Montclair State University as the Autism Center of Excellence (ACE) Coordinating Center, dedicated to autism research, treatment, and education.

Through the fiscal year 2014 budget, Governor Christie is providing \$86 million for the Early Intervention Program, aimed at identifying, diagnosing, and caring for children from birth to age three with autism, as well as other developmental disabilities.

Over the past three and a half years, Governor Christie has worked hard to ensure that New Jerseyans with developmental disabilities are able to lead fulfilling lives right here at home. His Administration has dedicated funding for young adults with developmental disabilities who age out of the Department of Education's special education entitlement by ensuring a seamless transition to the Department of Human Services' adult day-programming.

In 2010, Governor Christie signed into law the "Central Registry of Offenders Against Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, requiring DHS to maintain a central registry of caregivers working in these programs who have been determined to have abused, neglected, or exploited an individual with a developmental disability.

Governor Christie is proud of the work he and his administration have achieved and the great strides our state has made since taking office in giving individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to live rich lives in community-based settings, among their family, friends, loved ones, and neighbors. In a prospective second term, Governor Christie is committed to building on this record of accomplishment and working to further improve life here in New Jersey.

**For a full list of candidates who will appear on the November ballot, please visit The Arc of New Jersey on the web at:**

**<http://www.arcnj.org>**



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS: ***“WHY I VOTE!”***

### **Evelyn Ramundo, *Self-Advocate***



Growing up, my grandparents always told me how important voting is. Later, in high school, my history teacher spoke to my class about voting and the result of past presidential elections. I was excited to have the opportunity to vote a president into office who represented my beliefs, so I made the decision to get registered to vote. My polling place is close to my house, so I walk there on Election Day to cast my ballot.

I know I have the right to take my time in reviewing the questions on the ballot. Don't worry - you don't have to vote alone. If you need assistance in the voting booth at your polling place, you have the right to ask a family member, a member of your support staff, or a poll worker for help.

Legislators, or law makers, are responsible for helping people and making decisions that are in the best interest of the people they are elected to represent. Voting is about having the opportunity to elect people who represent my beliefs and who look out for people living in their legislative districts. I vote because I want to make sure New Jersey's elected officials are looking out for and preserving funding for the services that people with I/DD use, such as supported employment programs and residential services.

### **Colleen Watkins, *Self-Advocate***



I have been a registered voter since 1995. As New Jersey citizens and registered voters, we are all in charge of making choices about our lives. Voting is a choice. We vote for people who we feel will make things better for ourselves and other people.

As a Self-Advocate, I know how important it is to speak up. Speaking up for yourself is how you receive the services and supports you need. Voting gives you the opportunity to make a choice about the important things in life, like how much funding will be provided to employment centers and residential services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In March 2013, I delivered testimony at a Senate Budget Committee hearing. The hearing was an opportunity for people to speak directly to the elected officials responsible for making decisions about the state budget. My testimony included a recommendation to increase funding for community provider agencies, which provide supports to people with disabilities across New Jersey.

The Senate and Assembly Budget Committee representatives heard us! An extra \$13.2M was included in the FY2014 State Budget because self-advocates spoke

up and made recommendations to their legislators. I am excited to hear about the increase in funding because I know this money will be used to help more people live, work and recreate in the community.

## Renee Pierce, Self-Advocate

I have been a registered New Jersey voter since November 2000. My residential provider helped me register to vote when I moved to Essex County from Burlington County.

I believe it is important to vote because it gives you a voice. Voting allows you to be heard by people who handle issues that affect the lives of every New Jersey citizen, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

It is important that people with I/DD speak up and advocate for funding for community based supports and services, like day programs and employment training. If you chose not to vote, you run the risk of not having your voice heard by the people making decisions about your life and the services you use every day.

Voting is my right and I really like to vote. A lot of people don't vote because they don't feel that their voice is heard, but I would disagree. Exercising your right to vote allows you to use your voice and help yourself, as well as many other people who depend on supports and services in the community.

Voting gives every person the opportunity to speak up and voice their opinion. I respect the fact that every person has the right to vote, even if their opinion is different from my own.



## Rose Kuprianov, Parent

My daughter, Natalie is a young woman with Down syndrome. She also is the younger sister of her brothers Alex and Derek. As a family growing up, we were all very close and aware of how political decisions affected a single parent family on a limited budget.

From a young age, Alex and Derek sold *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on strategic selling spots in Wildwood throughout summer break. During down times, they were able to read the unsold papers, receiving an early introduction to current events. On the local level, playing wiffle ball in a city park brought the ire of older neighbors. The boys were able to advocate for themselves to civic leaders on their own behalf.

Navigating services for an individual with disabilities presented another challenge. Consequently, we became very politically active. We are all registered to vote, including Natalie, who is also employed as an election poll worker. One of our favorite books is *Horton Hears a Who*, which exemplifies the premise that **every voice (or vote!) counts**. If there are specific political issues dear to the hearts of individuals with disabilities, it is very important that these same individuals rally together to vote for the candidate who is sensitive to their particular needs.



# On November 5, 2013

## Your **VOTE** Is Your **VOICE**!

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