



GET OUT THE VOTE 2015

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

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When you vote for a candidate you are choosing someone to represent you and to be your voice when important issues are debated and decided. Learning more about the voting process, and the people who are running for office, will help you when it comes time to cast your vote. This year, New Jersey voters will elect members to the New Jersey State Assembly. Members of the State Assembly, like members of the State Senate, make many big decisions throughout the year that impact services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. It is these elected officials that influence the budgets and laws that affect your life.

With this in mind, we hope that this [Get Out The VOTE 2015 Guide](#) will help you in advance of Election Day. It contains a number of key dates and instructions that outline how you can become a registered voter and where and how you can cast your vote. Please check out our web site, www.gotv2015.org, for additional information and content.

Who are the candidates?

Voters in November will elect representatives to serve in the State Assembly for two-year terms. There are 40 districts in New Jersey and each district is represented by two members of the Assembly. This means there are 80 open seats and according to the Division of Elections, there are approximately 170 candidates. This group includes a mix of both incumbents and new candidates interested in securing a seat. In addition, residents of District 5 will also elect a new State Senator as the previous representative vacated the seat last year. The list of individuals running, broken down by district, can be accessed here:

www.nj.gov/state/elections/2015-results/official-2015-primary-candidates-nj-general-assembly-0413a.pdf.

Incumbents are noted with an asterisk.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What is voting?

Voting is your right. Voting is your choice. Voting is your voice.

Why should you vote?

Voting allows you to elect people that will represent you and fight for the issues you believe in.

Who can vote?

To vote you must be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years old and 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. 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. Only a judge can declare that an individual lacks 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 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 a disability.

When is voting?

Voting takes place on Tuesday, November 3, 2015.

How can I register to vote?

You can register to vote by mailing in the [Voter Registration Application](#) to your county clerk. You can also register to vote in person at the Office of the County Commissioner of Registration. The application can be printed from the New Jersey Division of Elections web site: www.state.nj.us/state/elections. You must register by **October 13, 2015**. To find your county clerk, visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-local-officials.html>.

How can I vote by mail instead of in person?

If you want to vote by mail instead of in person, it is a 2-step process.

Step 1 - Complete and return your [Vote By Mail Application](#). You can download a [Vote By Mail Application](#) online at: http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/mail_in_doe.html or call the office of the [New Jersey Division of Elections](#) at **609-292-0034**. After completing the application, mail it to your County Clerk. You can mail the application to the office of the County Clerk up to 7 days before the election. Or you can return your application in person to the office of the County Clerk until 3 pm the day before the election.

Step 2 - Complete & return your **Vote by Mail Ballot**. (A Vote by Mail Ballot used to be called an absentee ballot.) After receiving your application, the County Clerk will send you the **Vote by Mail Ballot**. Follow the instructions on the ballot to vote. You must follow directions on the ballot EXACTLY or your vote may not be counted. For example, you have to sign the certificate attached to the back flap of the envelope after sealing it. To have your ballot count as a vote, you must return the ballot to the office of the Board of Elections before polls close on Election Day. You can only vote **ONE TIME** in any election. If you have already asked for a **Vote by Mail Ballot**, you may **NOT** vote in person during that election.

What do I need to vote in person?

You must bring proof that you live in your county before you can register to vote and cast your vote on Election Day. Proof can include a driver's license, a student ID, a 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.

Where do I vote?

Polling places are typically set up at schools, libraries or firehouses in your town. Registered voters are assigned a specific location to vote. To find out where your polling place is located and if you are registered, visit the **NJ Division of Elections** web site at www.state.nj.us/state/elections. The web site will also let you know if your polling place is ADA compliant or accessible.

What time is voting?

Voting starts at 6 a.m. and ends at 8 p.m.

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 **(a) 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.**

What should I do if I go to vote and am told I can't because I have a disability?

If you have a problem on Election Day with being allowed to vote or getting assistance with voting, call **Disability Rights NJ** at **1-800-922-7233**.

BALLOT QUESTIONS:

There are no statewide ballot questions this year. We do however recommend checking with your county clerk to determine whether you will be asked to cast a vote on a local issue. Visit the **NJ Division of Elections** web site, www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-local-officials.html, to find contact information for all of the local county clerks.

Want to know more about the candidates?

In an effort to learn more about the candidates, The Arc of New Jersey distributed a questionnaire about disability issues to individuals running for office. Responses from the candidates and additional resources will be posted on our web site, www.gotv2015.org, beginning **Monday, Oct. 5, 2015**.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: *WHY I VOTE*



Alice Belanger, *Self-Advocate*

I believe that voting is important in order to have someone in office who will work for the people, and not just themselves. If you don't vote, you're not helping the world or our country change for the better. Watch some of the debates on T.V., read about the candidates' campaigns and learn more about the ideas each candidate has. You can either agree or disagree with the candidates' ideas. The candidate that you agree with on the topics you are passionate about, you can choose to vote for them. I also think you should always think hard about who you want to vote for.



Megan Friel, *Self-Advocate*

I think it's important to vote so you can voice your own opinion. When you vote I think you can understand more about what's going on, like knowing who the President is and knowing the functions of the other government offices. It felt good when I voted in 2008 because I was able to have my own opinion about who I thought would be a good President.

I think if you are unsure about voting, you should think of it like this. What if you liked one of the candidates more than the other? If you don't vote, the candidate you do believe in may not win. Your vote could be the deciding vote. You may spend a lot of time thinking 'If I voted for that candidate, would they have won?'



William Nivison, *Parent*

My son Eric was born with cerebral palsy and is dependent on others for many of his needs. Despite his challenges, he has an inquisitive mind and a desire to be involved. I remember Eric's first opportunity to vote: it was the 2008 presidential election. Eric had paid close attention to the candidates and their positions. He had very strong feelings on who he wanted to vote for and he proudly cast his vote. Voting is important for many reasons. It provides an opportunity to influence policies. It provides an opportunity to support like-minded individuals. It provides an opportunity to have your voice heard. And it provides an opportunity to be included in an important and fundamental aspect of our society. As we advocate for increased inclusion and greater opportunities for persons with disabilities, it is important to take advantage of one of the most basic rights afforded us: the right to vote. Simply by exercising that right, you say that I belong. Even if it is difficult to speak, you can make your voice heard.

Want to hear more from self advocates about why they vote?

Be sure to visit www.govt2015.org, for additional testimonials and resources you can use on Election Day.