

## **Accessibility Issues**

### **Background**

At the Vote Indiana Team meeting on March 27, 2009, Team members and members of the public raised issues about voting accessibility. During the meeting, HAVA Administrator, Joe McLain, reported on the efforts made by the HAVA office and counties to improve accessibility. One of the very first orders of business was to conduct a survey of all polling places in 2003 and 2004 to determine their adherence to ADA standards. Another includes purchasing large quantities of items, such as ramps, signs, door handles, etc. to improve the physical accessibility of polling places. Accessibility concerns have also been a prominent component in poll worker training and voter education. In recent years monetary grants have been processed by the office for county polling place accessibility improvements.

### **Continue to be Inclusive**

The Team member representing the disabilities community, Dee Ann Hart, believes that the HAVA office has done a fine job, but needs to continue to be inclusive when devising poll worker training and voter education strategies.

### **Polling Places**

Rick Edwards (member of the public), believed it was a positive thing that the survey conducted by Count Us IN used ADA standards. However, he believes that adherence to ADA standards does not necessarily mean that a facility is fully accessible (for certain voters with certain disabilities).

### **Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services (IPAS)**

David Smith, Counsel for IPAS, believes that the grievance process needs improvement. A survey was conducted among those in the disabilities community (both the disabled and caregivers), and it showed that ½ of the community were not aware of their rights under HAVA. More education is needed to inform the community of their rights and the grievance process. He would like to see public awareness increased.

Mr. Smith also was concerned with language in *IC 3-5-5-17* regarding the inability of a person to register to vote at a facility he/she may be committed in, because it is not considered a “residence” under this code site. Many individuals in these facilities have no family and thus no where else to register as a “residence”.

### **Military**

Evan Shearin, Team member representing the military, had concerns about the communication between election officials and Guard/Reserve units. Those serving overseas generally have less access to ballots and voting than those at home. E-mail voting has helped improve this, but more needs to be done.