



Make Voting Accessible for ALL!

A Position Statement By:

Project VOTE!

National Center for Self-Determination and 21st Century Leadership

Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered

The Arc of the United States

TheArcLink Incorporated

American Association of People with Disabilities

The Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems

Whereas voting is the most basic right and responsibility of every American citizen, including citizens with disabilities.

Whereas protecting the right to vote of citizens with disabilities ensures that the democratic process will work for the benefit of all.

Whereas registering to vote and casting a ballot promotes citizen involvement, self-determination and independence.

Whereas the majority of states have elections or guardianship laws that take away the right to vote of individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities.

Be it resolved, it is time for citizens and local, state and federal officials to:

- ★ Remove language in state constitutions and statutes that automatically restricts the right to vote for citizens that are labeled with developmental and cognitive disability. A disability label, by itself, is not a sufficient reason to restrict someone's right to vote.
- ★ Change state guardianship statutes to say that voting is not restricted.

- ★ Learn from those states that do not have limiting language in their constitutions, elections and guardianship statutes, regulations and forms.
- ★ Require that all persons who are going to have a guardian be informed about the impact of guardianship on their right to vote.
- ★ Require that persons who are going to be guardians clearly understand how guardianship affects the individual's right to vote.
- ★ Educate citizens, elections officials, legislators, teachers and others about how guardianship appointments can automatically limit a person's right to vote.
- ★ Build coalitions that increase guardianship awareness and bring about change in guardianship laws and statutes. Ensure that the leadership for coalition activities comes from self-advocacy and disability leaders.
- ★ Promote new policies that provide for alternatives to guardianship, such as power of attorney and supported decision-making.
- ★ Ensure that all young people with disabilities in high school receive information about voting and have opportunities to register to vote.

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS POSITION STATEMENT!

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SAY, "GO VOTE" AND LEAVE YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The National Center for Self-Determination and 21st Century Leadership is a partnership of Moore Advocacy, Oklahoma People First, the RRTC on Aging with Developmental Disabilities at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Portland State University and Self Advocates Becoming Empowered.

