



DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER, INC.

Celebrating 30 Years — 1977 to 2007

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The Protection & Advocacy (P&A) System in Arkansas

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February 22, 2008

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Susan Inman
Director of Elections
Pulaski County Election Commission
201 S. Broadway, Suite 330
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Americans with Disabilities Act/Access Surveys of Polling Sites in
Pulaski County

Dear Ms. Inman:

Disability Rights Center, Inc. (DRC) is the federally authorized and funded nonprofit organization serving as the Protection and Advocacy System (P&A) and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. DRC is authorized to protect human, civil and legal rights of all Arkansans with disabilities consistent with federal law.

Between January 29, 2008, and February 4, 2008, during the early voting for the Presidential Preferential Primary Election, DRC advocates surveyed 6 of the 9 designated early voting sites for Pulaski County using the U.S. Department of Justice's *ADA Checklist for Polling Places* and documented barriers at 4 of these 6 sites. The barriers we identified are stated below:¹

(1) Sue Cowan Williams Library, Little Rock

- There is no van access signage;
- accessible parking spaces were only 91" wide (ADA requires accessible spaces to be 96" wide);

¹ The other 2 sites DRC advocates surveyed were the Mc Math Branch Library, Little Rock and the Roosevelt Thompson Library, Little Rock. No significant barriers were identified.

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"To passionately assist the lives of people with disabilities through education, empowerment and protection of their legal rights."

- there are 3 different areas for accessible parking, but none closest to the accessible entrance;
- sidewalk was not level (had dips) with level changes over ½”;
- the accessible voting machine does not have enough clear space (only 34” away from the wall) for a person using a wheelchair to maneuver.

(2) Jacksonville City Hall, Jacksonville

- No van access signage;
- accessible parking spaces closest to the entrance have no striped access aisles – there are accessible spaces with striped access aisles located in the back of the building; however, these accessible spaces are not located close to the entrance;
- the door hardware at the entrance is not usable with one hand because it requires pushing and holding a button, while pulling the door open.

Side bar: When our advocates conducted this survey on February 1, 2008, none of the poll workers knew which voting machine was the accessible voting machine.

(3) William F. Laman Library, North Little Rock

- There are 4 accessible parking spaces; however, only 3 of the accessible spaces have a sign with the symbol of accessibility placed in a visible location.

(4) Jess Odom Community Center, Maumelle

- The parking lot has 4 accessible parking spaces that are located on the shortest accessible route to the accessible entrance; however, only 3 have a sign displaying the symbol of accessibility. The van accessible parking space satisfied the measurement requirements but has no sign designating it as van accessible;
- the passenger drop-off area is level and an accessible route connects the curb ramp to the entrance; however, the access aisle for the passenger drop-off area does not satisfy the ADA requirements that the aisle be “at least 5’ wide and 20’ long” (the access aisle is 12’ wide and 13’ long);
- the entrance, which is clearly marked as the entrance to the polling location, connects to an accessible route, is clear of any obstacles, and equipped with hardware that could be used with one hand; however the entrance door requires more than 5 pounds of force to open – force to open this door is between 6 and 7 pounds to open.

Side bar: DRC advocates suggested that poll workers prop open the door on Election Day in order to provide an accessible route. They agreed to make sure that the doors are propped open.

- Inside the community center, the check-in table is only 27 inches high, short of the 28-38 inch requirement.

On February 5, 2008, Super Tuesday, DRC advocates surveyed 12 of the designated voting sites for Pulaski County using the U.S. Department of Justice's *ADA Checklist for Polling Places* and documented barriers at 11 of these 12 sites.² The barriers we identified are stated below:

(1) Bess Chisum Stephens YWCA, Little Rock

- There are no access aisles for accessible parking spaces;
- designated accessible signage is not visible when a car is parked in accessible space;
- there is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage.

(2) W.W. Williams NW Patrol, Little Rock

- There is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;
- designated accessible parking spaces are not 96" wide (only 91" wide);
- designated accessible signage is not visible when a car is parked in accessible space;
- the entry door is less than 32" clear space when opened due to the inside push bar - clear space measured only 30";
- there is no signage directing anyone where to vote, once inside;
- the accessible voting machine is broken.

(3) Metropolitan Career Center, Little Rock

- There is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;
- the ramp has a vertical drop-off and no edge protection;
- the entry door requires more than 5 pounds of force to open – force to open the door is between 14 and 16 pounds;
- the accessible voting machine is closed.

(4) Wrightsville City Hall, Wrightsville

- There is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;
- designated accessible signage is not visible when a car is parked in accessible space;
- the entrance door requires more than 5 pounds of force to open – force to open the door is between 12 and 14 pounds.

(5) North Heights Recreation Center, North Little Rock

- There is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;

² The other site DRC advocates surveyed was the Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock. No significant barriers were identified.

- accessible parking spaces are located near the front entrance; however the accessible entrance is located on the side and back of the building;
- there is no accessible route from accessible parking spaces located at the front of the building to the front entrance.

(6) North Little Rock High School – East Campus, North Little Rock

- 360 parking spaces available with 8 designated for accessible parking; however there is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage/no van access aisle – ADAAG requires that for a parking lot with parking space totals between 301 and 400 there be a minimum number of 8 accessible spaces and one in every 8 accessible spaces, but not less than, shall be served by an access aisle 96” wide minimum and shall be designated van accessible;
- there is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;
- there are no access aisles beside the accessible parking spaces;
- there is no signage posted for any designated accessible parking space;
- the passenger drop-off area’s access aisle measured only 4’ wide as opposed to the required 5’.

(7) Amtrak Train Station, Little Rock

- There is no van accessible space/no van accessible signage;
- there are 2 designated accessible parking signs at parking spaces near the front entrance; however it is impossible to determine how many accessible parking spaces are required because no parking spaces near the front entrance are striped;
- there are no access aisles beside the parking spaces at the front entrance with the designated accessible parking signs.

(8) Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock

- The parking lot contains 49 parking spaces. The required total number of accessible spaces for 49 parking spaces is 1 space with minimum 60” wide access aisle plus 1 van-accessible space. There are two accessible parking spaces at 89” and 104”;
- there is no van-accessible parking space provided with an access aisle;
- there are no access aisles;
- there is one accessible parking sign that is shared between the two accessible parking spaces. It is too low to the ground and it does not provide the required van-accessible signage;
- the sidewalk to the accessible ramp is not free of steps and abrupt level changes are over ½” - the sidewalk has level changes between 1 and 2”;
- the ramp’s slope meets the required ratio; however, the ramp’s handrails are mounted at 32” above the ramp surface – handrails are to be mounted between 34” and 38” above the ramp surface;
- there is no edge protection provided for the ramp.

(9) Cammack Village City Hall, Little Rock

- There are six parking spaces and the required minimum number of accessible spaces must be 1 van-accessible space with a minimum 96” wide access aisle;
- the polling site has 1 accessible parking spot; however, it does not have an access aisle;
- the accessible parking spot meets the 96” width requirement but there is no van-accessible access aisle;
- the “accessible ramp” is located on the side of the City Hall building and there is a small walkway between the ramp (which was in a zig-zag position) and another building that houses the fire-trucks. The ramp is totally inaccessible. The ramp is only 30” wide – should be 36” wide; and only 34” wide when it changes directions. At the entrance of the ramp there is a raised surface between the ramp and the asphalt that measures 2” – should be no higher than $\frac{3}{4}$ ”. The ramp has 38” of vertical height and 249” of horizontal distance. The handrails are mounted too low at 30.2” above the ramp surface. There is no edge protection provided;
- the entrance into the polling site is inaccessible from the ramp. There is a raised threshold at the entrance into the polling site from the ramp. The threshold is 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” on one side and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” on the other – should be no higher than $\frac{3}{4}$ ”;
- the width of the door to the entrance into the polling site is 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” wide – should be 32”.
- the door hardware is a knob and cannot be opened without twisting and turning.

Side bar: There is a separate issue DRC advocates observed that does not relate to the polling site. The building contains a meeting room on the top level, where the voting took place, and on the bottom level is the City Hall and police office. There is no ramp or accessible entrance into the bottom level. Only steps are provided at the entrance. The ramp only allows entrance into the top level. If someone needs access to the police and/or City Hall it is not possible.

(10) St John Vision Center, Little Rock

- There are 4 accessible parking spaces that meet all the measurement requirements; however, there is no signage for any of the accessible parking spaces;
- the International Symbol of Access painted on the asphalt is in bad condition. It is extremely faded and some of the paint is missing;
- the paint for the access aisle is also faded and beginning to wear away;
- the parking lot itself is in very bad condition full of cracks and unlevelled areas, specifically around the accessible parking area;
- there is no accessible route directly to the building. The route goes from the parking lot to a curb ramp onto the sidewalk. There are 2 other

sidewalks attached to the main sidewalks which lead to the entrance door. All of the sidewalks are in very poor condition and there are level changes well above ½”;

- the main entrance door needed more than 5 pounds of force to pull it open - 8 pounds of force are required to pull open the door;

Side bar: DRC advocates informed the poll official of this problem and suggested that he prop the door open during the voting hours. He said he would.

- The check in and voting tables are 27” high, 1” short of the required 28”-34”.

(11) Willow House Activity Center, North Little Rock

- The check in and voting tables are 27” high, 1” short of the required 28”-34”.

By this letter, we request that the Cammack Village City Hall, Little Rock, be immediately eliminated as a polling site. We also request that the Pulaski County Election Commission use our survey results for the other sites to implement temporary and/or permanent modifications needed by most voters with disabilities and that this action be taken before the elections in May 2008.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Jan Baker
Managing Attorney