

Mapping Disabled Americans' Access to Democracy: New York

By Casey Doherty | October 29, 2026

Author's note: The disability community is rapidly evolving to use identity-first language in place of person-first language. This is because it views disability as being a core component of identity, much like race and gender. Some members of the community, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, prefer person-first language. In this report, the terms are used interchangeably.

In July 2026, the Center for American Progress introduced the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#), a new resource that provides users with comprehensive, state-specific voting and election accessibility scores based on survey data from state and local disability and civic organizations. The tracker also offers stories from disabled voters across the country, national and state action targets, and national and state disability and civic organizations to which users can turn for more information on voting accessibility efforts.

The tracker examines accessibility across five areas of the voting process: voter registration efforts, voting information, in-person voting, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, and voting by mail. Together, these data provide a snapshot of where disabled voters experience barriers and where states have opportunities to improve voting accessibility.

As part of CAP's continued analysis of voting accessibility, this fact sheet takes a closer look at the experiences of disabled voters and opportunities to strengthen voting access in New York.

Early findings in New York

According to state and local disability and civic organizations surveyed for the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#), New York received an overall voting accessibility score of 3 out of 5, slightly below the national score of 3.3.

Accessibility varied considerably across different parts of the voting process.



Explore the map:
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/accessibledemocracy/>

New York voting accessibility scores:

2.7
Registration
efforts

2.5
Voting
information

2.5
Voting
in person

3.3
ADA
compliance

4.1
Voting
by mail

New York's highest score was for voting by mail, at 4.1. This is substantially higher than its scores for every other category and above the national voting by mail score of 3.7. By contrast, voting information and in-person voting received the state's lowest scores, at 2.5 each. New York's registration efforts score of 2.7 was slightly above the national score of 2.3, while its ADA compliance score of 3.3 fell below the national score of 3.8.

Recent changes to New York election law provide important context for these findings. In 2023, Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) signed a voting rights legislative package, which included the provision that any registered New York voter can [apply to vote early by mail](#), expanding the option beyond voters who qualify for absentee voting. This is particularly important because many disabled voters rely on [voting by mail](#) due to [barriers](#) they may face with in-person voting.

Another recent legislative update [established a deadline](#) for changing the location of a polling place for early voting. Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon (D), sponsor of the [bill](#), [said](#), "My constituents have been frustrated about not being informed in advance of polling site changes, so this new law is overdue. Individuals with disabilities in particular continue to face challenges as the vast majority of polling sites are not fully accessible and they need timely information to accommodate their unique traveling and accessibility needs."

These policies create important mechanisms for voting access, but the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) shows that the existence of accessibility requirements does not necessarily eliminate the barriers disabled voters encounter when registering, obtaining election information, traveling to the polls, or voting in person.

Additionally, [legislation](#) introduced in the 2025–2026 legislative session would create a separate line at polling places for disabled voters and another [proposal](#) is focused on "modernizing voter registration" and "promoting access to voting for individuals with disabilities." The latter [bill](#) would require the state board of elections to provide grants to study, test, and develop accessible paper ballot voting and verification.

A disabled New Yorker's experience

For Jermaine, a New York voter, accessibility barriers begin before he reaches his polling place. "I think, with disability and voting, it shouldn't be so hard, but sometimes it really is, and that bothers me," he shared in an interview with CAP. "I'm an

electric wheelchair user. Sometimes, you know, traveling around to a voting place takes a while, or getting there, or the sidewalks are a bit uneven, so I have to always think about those things.”

Jermaine’s experience illustrates how voting accessibility extends beyond whether a polling place itself complies with accessibility requirements. Access to transportation, sidewalks, and the route to a polling place may all affect whether a disabled person can vote.

He also emphasized why disabled people themselves need to be included in conversations about voting access: “A lot of times our voices are not included in the voting conversation, so I felt like it was my duty to kind of offer up my thoughts about the voting process.”

Targeted issue areas

The [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) features state-specific issue area targets, gathered from state and local disability and civic organizations working to ensure disabled people can vote.

Common ideas for improvement in New York include:

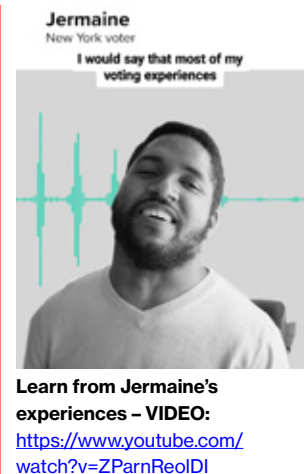
- Provide free, accessible transportation to the polls
- Provide enhanced accessibility training for poll workers, developed and taught by disabled people
- Provide training to ensure poll workers know how to set up and operate accessible voting machines

Continuing to map voting accessibility

The [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) is designed to grow as CAP collects additional data. CAP plans to continue collecting survey submissions from state-based and local disability and civic organizations in order to conduct state-level analysis, produce additional state-based fact sheets, and perform longitudinal analysis of changes in voting accessibility scores over time. CAP is also continuing to collect stories from disabled voters about their experiences participating in elections.

Please contact accessible_democracy@americanprogress.org if your organization is interested in completing the survey, and complete [this form](#) if you are a disabled voter interested in sharing your voting experiences.

Ensuring that disabled people can participate fully in elections is essential to American democracy. The [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) offers advocates, policy-makers, and community organizations a tool to identify where voting accessibility progress has been made, where barriers exist, and what reforms would increase accessibility for disabled voters.



The author would like to thank Mia Ives-Rublee, Vilissa Thompson, Bill Rapp, Hai-Lam Phan, Olivia Mowry, Toni Pandolfo, William Roberts, Ben Olinsky, Benjamin Hovland, Peter Gordon, Alex Cogan, Gréta Bedekovics, Huá Huī Vogel, Raven Diaz, Michelle Bishop, Dr. Doug Kruse, and Dr. Lisa Schur for their valuable contributions to this project; Chandler Hall and Saami Baig for their thorough fact-checking; and CAP's Art, Creative, Technology, Editorial, and Legal teams for their guidance.