

Mapping Disabled Americans' Access to Democracy: Ohio

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 Ohio.

Early findings in Ohio

According to state and local disability and civic organizations surveyed for the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#), Ohio received an overall voting accessibility score of 2.9 out of 5, 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/>

Ohio voting accessibility scores:

1.7
Registration
efforts

2.4
Voting
information

3.6
Voting
in person

3.2
ADA
compliance

3.6
Voting
by mail

Ohio's highest scores were for in-person voting and voting by mail, which were both scored at 3.6. These are generally aligned with the national scores for these voting areas. Registration efforts received Ohio's lowest score, at 1.7, below the national score of 2.3. Ohio's voting information and ADA compliance scores also fell below the national averages.

Recent changes to Ohio election laws provide context for these findings. In 2023, a [new law](#) made several aspects of voting in Ohio [less accessible](#). It forces in-person voters to use an [unexpired photo ID](#) to vote, which increases [barriers](#) to voting for disabled people. The law also limits counties to only [one drop box per county](#), which may only be open during business hours during the early voting period. This restriction is particularly relevant because organizations surveyed for the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) shared that having more than one ballot drop box per county could improve voting accessibility. For disabled voters who face transportation barriers, having only one ballot drop box per county may make returning a ballot more difficult.

The law restricted who can assist a disabled voter by making it a [felony](#) for anyone other than an election official, mail carrier, or certain family members to possess or return a disabled voter's absentee ballot. This meant that disabled voters could not choose who could assist them with their ballot, whether that be a friend, neighbor, or trusted caregiver. However, in 2024, a federal court [struck down](#) these restrictions, [stating](#) that Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act allows voters with disabilities to select a person of their choice to assist them with voting, including the return of the voter's absentee ballot.

More recently, [House Bill 470](#), [introduced](#) during the 2025–2026 legislative session, would create an automatic voter registration system in Ohio. This is especially important given that Ohio scored just 1.7 out of 5 on the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) for its voter registration efforts. Implementing automatic voter registration could help reduce barriers and improve access to voter registration for people with disabilities.

A disabled Ohioan shares

Fletcher, a disabled voter from Ohio, shared in an interview with CAP that he feels there may be “misconceptions” about himself as an autistic man when he goes to vote. He advocates for poll workers to support disabled voters and ensure polling places are ADA-compliant. Fletcher's experience highlights the need for poll worker training that is developed and taught by disabled people themselves.

Fletcher supports [automatic voter registration in Ohio](#), which has been shown to increase the [number of registered voters](#), [keep voter rolls up to date](#), [close racial gaps](#) in voter registration rates, and [reduce barriers](#) for disabled people. This is a particularly important suggestion, as the [Accessible Democracy Tracker](#) found that registration efforts were rated the least accessible part of the voting process both in Ohio and nationally (1.7 and 2.3, respectively). [House Bill 470](#) would create an automatic voter registration system in Ohio.

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 Ohio include:

- Display accurate, accessible signage about curbside voting
- Provide enhanced accessibility training for poll workers, developed and taught by disabled people
- Provide more than one ballot drop box per county

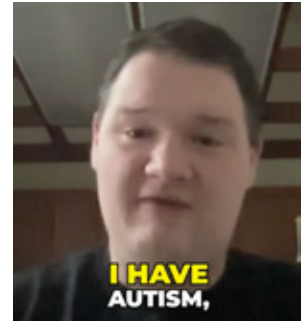
Continuing to map voting accessibility

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, Saami Baig, and Ben Greenho for their thorough fact-checking; and CAP's Art, Creative, Technology, Editorial, and Legal teams for their guidance.



Learn from Fletcher's experiences – VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TURbHI6F6g>