



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

New York's Protection & Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RENSSELAER COUNTY POLLING SITES ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE AND IN VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW

Albany, NY, August 1, 2016 – Disability Rights New York (DRNY), filed complaints with both the U.S. Department of Justice and the NYS Attorney General's Office regarding inaccessible polling locations in Rensselaer County that prevent people with disabilities from voting. DRNY found that 29 of the polling sites surveyed were not accessible and in many cases Ballot Marking Devices (BMD) used by people with disabilities were not ready to use or were malfunctioning.

“It is inexcusable that Rensselaer County is still using inaccessible polling locations and voting systems that don't work,” said Timothy A. Clune, DRNY Executive Director. “If you can't get in, you can't vote. Rensselaer County was advised of these problems a while ago and has not taken any action to fix them.”

Here is a link to DRNY's accompanying Press Release video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjRsqTyf6yg>

During the November 2015 General Election, DRNY surveyed 14 polling sites in Rensselaer County. All sites were found to have at least one barrier and the majority of poll sites had multiple barriers. After the survey was complete, DRNY shared the results with the Rensselaer County Board of Elections.

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During the April 2016 Primary Election, DRNY surveyed 27 polling sites, including 11 sites identified as inaccessible in November 2015. DRNY found that the same barriers existed, including barriers which could have been easily eliminated at little or no cost. For example:

- The entrance at the Osgood Firehouse in Troy, NY, has a 3.5 inch lip on the only path of travel to enter the building. The pavement was also dangerously cracked with a ¾ of an inch gap.
- At St. Mary's Church in Rensselaer, the BMD was not turned on or located to ensure voter privacy. Further questioning revealed that the site did not have a poll worker who knew how to operate the BMD. Other polling places had similar issues.

The right to vote is one of the most important rights of all Americans. "Voters with disabilities should be able to access the polls in their home communities like everyone else," said Clune. "These are clear violations of the ADA, which was passed 26 years ago."

DRNY is the designated federal Protection & Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program (P&A/CAP) for individuals with disabilities in New York State. If you or someone you know has experienced similar problems while voting, please contact DRNY at voting@DRNY.org or 518-432-7861.

#FixItNow

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