



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK



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08/08/2022

Rensselaer County Board of Elections
Ned Pattison Government Center
1600 Seventh Avenue
Troy, NY 12180

Dear Commissioner McDonough and Commissioner Schofield:

Disability Rights New York (DRNY) and the Brennan Center for Justice are contacting county boards of elections (BOEs) across the state regarding the requirements for early voting poll site locations, as detailed in § 8-600 of the New York Election Law. Revisions to this section went into effect on April 1, 2022¹, and we understand that BOEs may be experiencing challenges meeting these standards.

We would like to bring to your attention three updated requirements in the law: 1) the total number of early voting poll sites within a county, 2) the availability of poll sites within a county's highest-population city or municipality, and 3) poll site proximity to public transportation.

1) Total number of early voting poll sites within a county: Election Law § 8-600(2)(d) requires that counties with less than 500,000 registered voters have at least one (1) poll site for every full increment of 30,000 voters.² According to voter registration data provided by the New York State Board of Elections as of February 21, 2022, there are 108,267 registered voters in your county³, which requires the county to provide at least three (3) early voting poll sites. Our review of the poll sites available during recent elections showed that Rensselaer County provides three (3) sites during early voting. Rensselaer County's number of early voting poll sites therefore complies with this section of the law.

2) Availability of early voting poll sites within highest-population city or municipality: Election Law § 8-600(2)(b) requires that, in counties that include a city, at least one (1) early voting poll site must be located in the city with the highest population according to the last census⁴. In Rensselaer County, the highest-population city is Troy, and two (2) early voting poll

¹ N.Y. Elec. Law § 8-600(2) (McKinney 2022).

² N.Y. Elec. Law § 8-600(2)(d) (McKinney 2022).

³ New York State Board of Elections, Albany, NY, "Enrollment by County," last modified February 22, 2022, <https://www.elections.ny.gov/EnrollmentCounty.html>.

⁴ N.Y. Elec. Law § 8-600(2)(b) (McKinney 2022)



DRNY has offices in Albany, Brooklyn and Rochester.
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sites are currently located within its boundaries. Rensselaer County's early voting poll site locations therefore comply with this section of the law.

3) Early voting poll site proximity to public transportation: Election Law § 8-600(2)(h) requires that the selection of early voting poll site locations provide "adequate and equitable access" to voters, taking into consideration, among other factors, public transportation routes.⁵ The poll site in your county nearest to public transportation is 500 Federal Street, which is 0.04 miles on foot from the nearest public transportation stop. The median walking distance from a polling place to a public transportation stop in your county is 0.1 miles. According to peer-reviewed research, 0.25 miles is the commonly used threshold for acceptable walking distance in the United States.⁶ We encourage BOEs to keep that threshold in mind when determining poll site locations.

We would like to commend you for your hard work in selecting early voting poll site locations that are in compliance with the state election law and for your service to your community. If you would like any assistance in increasing accessibility through the selection of additional sites, please feel free to contact us at helen.hellmuth@drny.org.

As the general election approaches in November, we plan to visit polling places statewide to ensure the facilities are accessible to all voters. We have included in this letter a fact sheet with a list of the requirements for accessibility, as well as the most common issues we see. We look forward to seeing you soon and working together.

Thank you for your time, attention, and hard work running elections for the voters of Rensselaer County.

Sincerely,



Helen Hellmuth
Senior Advocate, Disability Rights New York



Hazel Millard
Advocacy Campaign Strategist, Brennan Center for Justice

⁵ N.Y. Elec. Law § 8-600(2)(h) (McKinney 2022).

⁶ Yang Y, Diez-Roux AV. Walking distance by trip purpose and population subgroups. *Am J Prev Med.* 2012 Jul;43(1):11-9. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2012.03.015. PMID: 22704740; PMCID: PMC3377942.



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