

# Accessible Communication for Election Offices

Communicating Trusted Election Information

May 12, 2020

#TrustedInfo2020

# Before we get started

- Take notes using the **Participant Guide**
- **Captioned recordings** will be available
- Use the **chat panel** to say hello, chat with other attendees, and participate in breakouts

# What we'll cover today

- Learn the principles of accessible communication and how they increase public trust
- Understand how people with disabilities experience information online
- Establish actionable guidelines for making your website more accessible

# Agenda

- Introduction to accessibility (30 min.)
- Breakout: Writing good alt text (15 min.)
- Making content more accessible (15 min.)
- Live demo (10 min.)
- Case study (10 min.)
- Group discussion (10 min.)

What does it mean for something to be accessible? Why is it important?

# INTRODUCTION TO ACCESSIBILITY

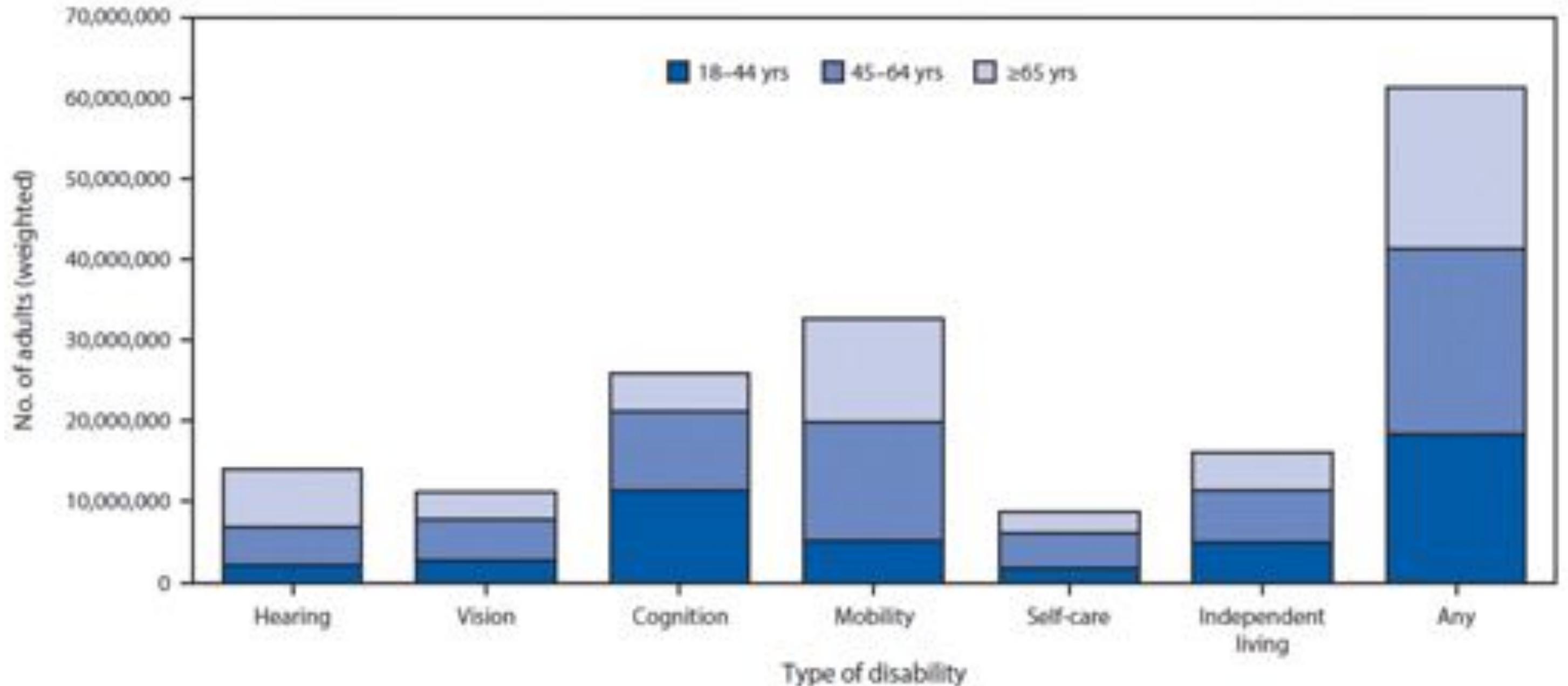
**Who are people with  
disabilities?**

# The six disability questions are:

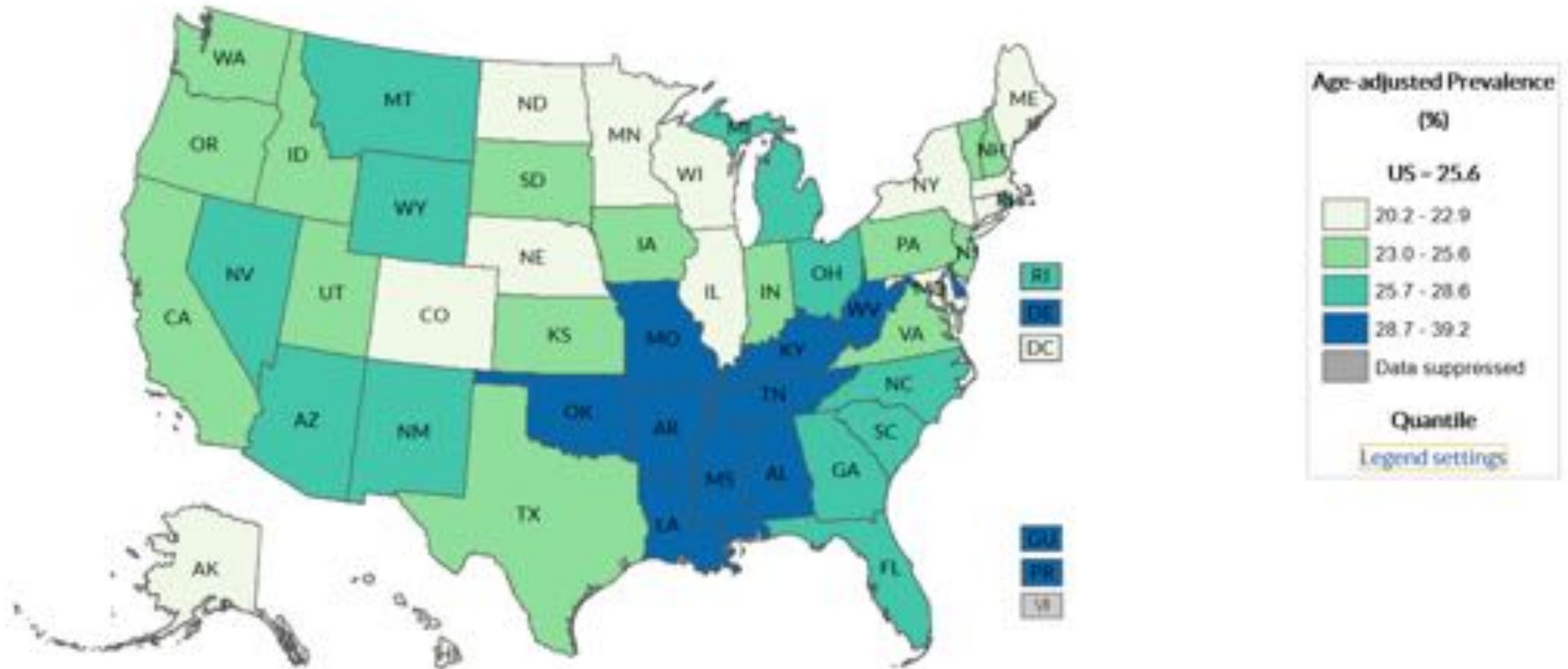
1. Are you deaf, or do you have serious difficulty hearing?
2. Are you blind, or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?
3. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions? (5 years old or older)
4. Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs? (5 years old or older)
5. Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing? (5 years old or older)
6. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping? (15 years old or older)

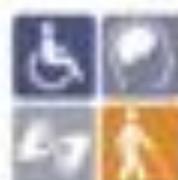
**Quick poll!**

# Estimated that 1 in 4 Americans (25%) have some sort of disability



# Disability status among adults 18 & older





## Adults with Disabilities: Ethnicity and Race

When it comes to the health of people with disabilities, it's important to know the health differences among racial and ethnic groups

Approximate number of adults with a disability by ethnicity and race



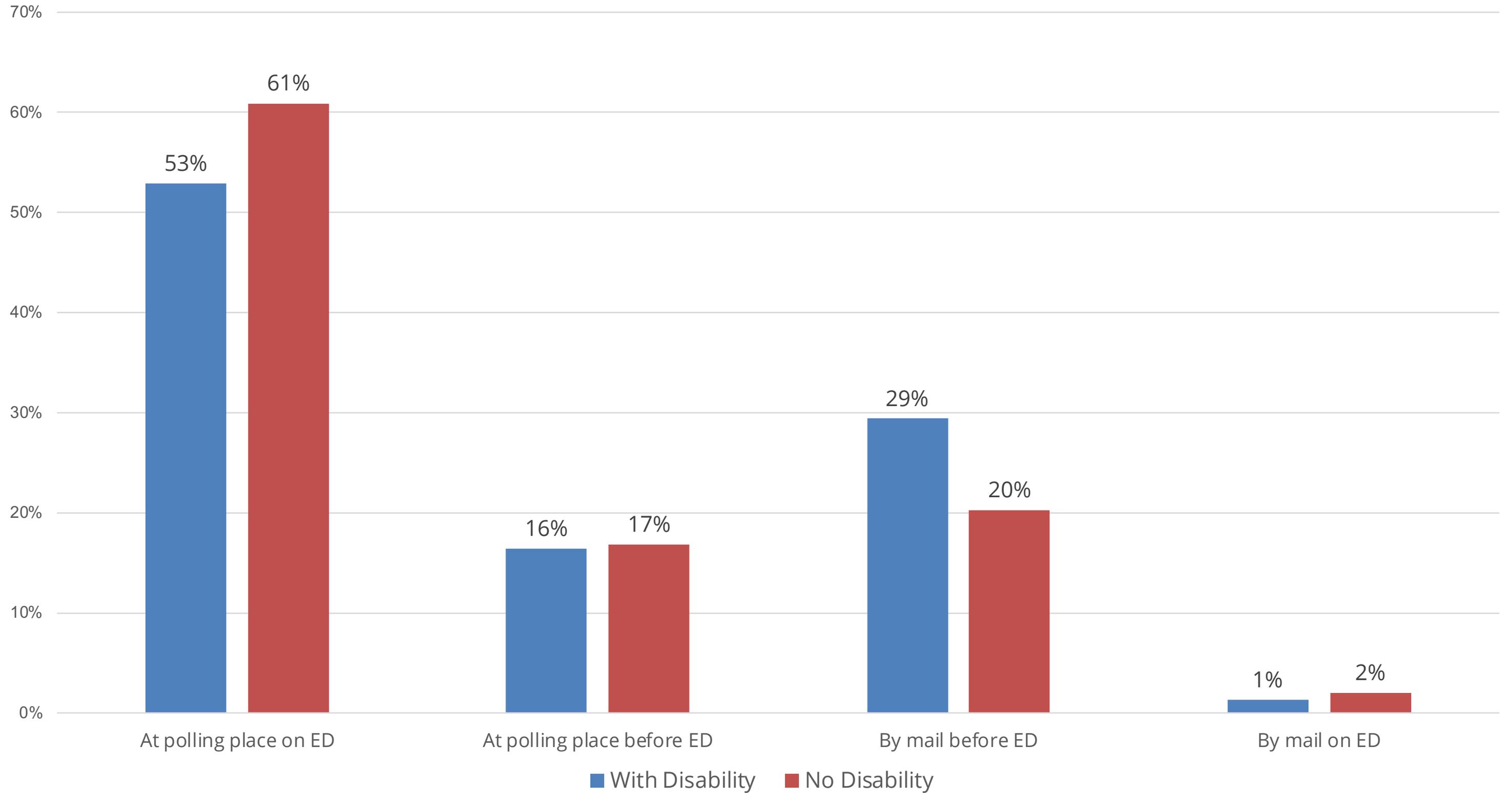
**How people with  
disabilities vote?**

	Disability	No Disability	Disability Gap
Registered to vote	65.7%	67.1%	-1.4%
Voted if registered	75.0%	80.6%	-5.6%
How registered to vote:			
At a department of motor vehicles	27.3%	35.6%	-8.4%
Went to a town hall or county/ government registration office	26.4%	18.1%	8.3%
Registered by mail	14.8%	14.1%	0.7%
Registered at polling place	7.7%	7.1%	0.7%
Filled out form at a registration drive	5.4%	4.4%	1.0%
At a school, hospital, or on campus	4.9%	6.1%	-1.3%
Registered using the Internet or online	4.1%	8.2%	-4.0%
At a public assistance agency	2.4%	1.1%	1.2%
Other	7.0%	5.3%	1.7%

If not registered to vote, why not:	Disability	No Disability	Disability Gap
Not interested in the election or not involved in politics	35.5%	44.1%	-8.6%
Permanent illness or disability	25.7%	1.6%	24.1%
Not eligible to vote	6.1%	8.9%	-2.7%
Did not meet registration deadlines	6.1%	13.7%	-7.6%
My vote would not make a difference	3.4%	3.7%	-0.3%
Did not know where or how to register	2.9%	4.7%	-1.8%
Difficulty with English	2.2%	2.1%	0.0%
Did not meet residency requirements/did not live here long enough	1.8%	4.3%	-2.6%
Other reason	16.4%	16.9%	-0.5%

Why didn't vote	Disability	No Disability	Disability Gap
Illness or disability (own or family's)	40.9%	7.8%	33.1%
Not interested, felt my vote wouldn't make a difference	12.1%	16.7%	-4.6%
Transportation problems	7.7%	2.1%	5.6%
Too busy, conflicting work or school schedule	7.3%	31.7%	-24.3%
Didn't like candidates or campaign issues	5.8%	5.5%	0.3%
Forgot to vote (or send in absentee ballot)	5.7%	5.7%	0.0%
Out of town or away from home	3.4%	10.7%	-7.4%
Registration problems (i.e. didn't receive absentee ballot, not registered in current location)	2.7%	3.3%	-0.6%
Inconvenient hours, polling place or hours or lines too long	1.7%	3.8%	-2.0%
Bad weather conditions	1.4%	0.4%	1.0%
Other	11.3%	12.3%	-1.0%

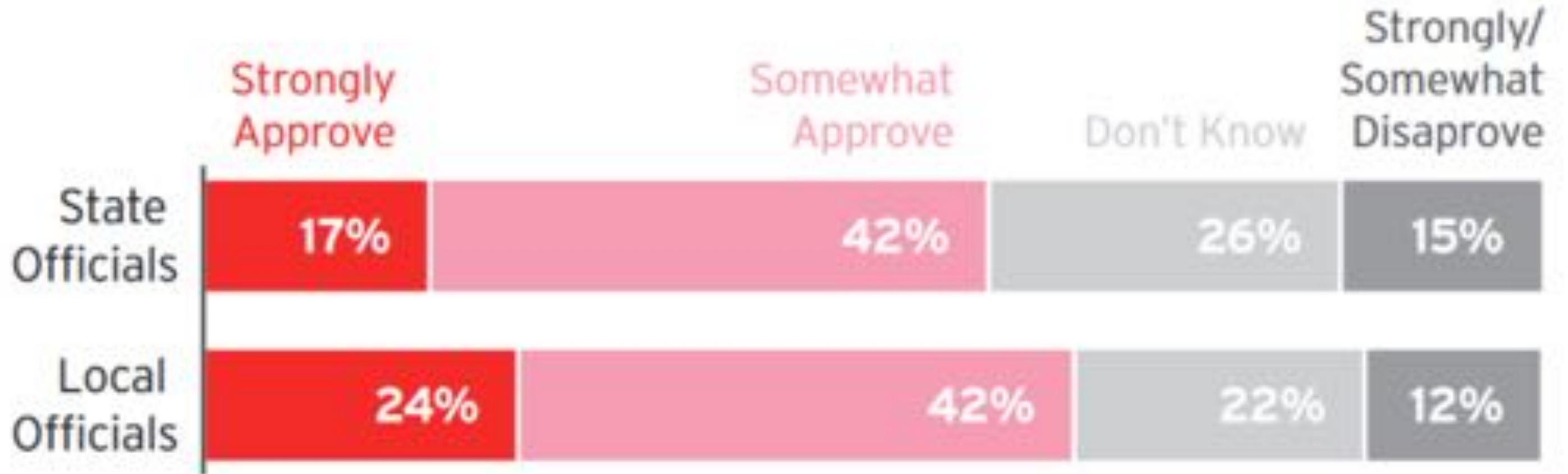
# How voters voted in 2018



**"Essential for some, useful  
for all"**

**How can accessibility build trust?**

# Local officials have a good start



# Accessibility and trust

- Relationship-building
- Accessible information is information someone can and will use
- Transparency

What are ways to think about accessibility?

# PRINCIPLES OF ACCESSIBILITY

# Principles of accessibility

Perceivable

Operable

Understandable

Robust

**Accessibility  
principles**

>

**Accessibility  
techniques**

**Perceivable**

# To make content more perceivable

- Ensure transformability
- Make sure message doesn't depend on style
- Use semantic markup (<h1>. <ul>, etc.)
- Have alt text for images
- Have labels for forms
- Have captions for videos

**Operable**

# To make content more operable

- Make your site usable by keyboard only
- Use a careful heading structure
- Include a “skip navigation” link
- Make page titles descriptive/specific
- Make link text descriptive (not “click here”)

**Understandable**

# To make content more understandable

- Use plain language
- With complex content, include definitions or a glossary
- Make website functions predictable, obvious, consistent
- Help users avoid and fix errors (e.g., in forms and input)

**Robust**

# To make content more robust

- Avoid HTML validation and parsing errors
- Use markup to facilitate accessibility: forms, form labels, frame titles, etc.
- Speak with your website vendor

What is alt text and how do you write it well?

# BREAKOUT

**What is alt text?**

- **What information does the image add?**
- **If the image contains...**
  - Text -- describe it
  - Visual information -- explain it
  - Sensory information -- describe it
  - Nothing new -- ignore it

- **Avoid noise words...**

“Photo of...”

“This is a ...”

“Picture shows a...”

- **Shoot for 5-15 words**



alt = "An animated simulation showing voters moving realistically through a polling place"

ElectionTools.org is an election official's one-stop-shop to the free tech resources that will transform how they're engaging voters.



The site provides access to the latest field-tested tools, including:

- Collection of civic icons and illustrations
- App to measure how long it takes to vote a ballot
- Simulation tool to allocate resources and minimize voter wait times

Each tool comes with step-by-step instructions, making them easy to use by anyone, regardless of technical ability.

Access the tools at [www.electiontools.org](http://www.electiontools.org).

Null Text: alt = ""

**Your turn! (5 min.)**

# Image #1



# Image #2



# Report back (5 min.)

Tell us about the alt text you drafted!

What was difficult or easy about your process?

With limited context, what did you use to make your decisions?

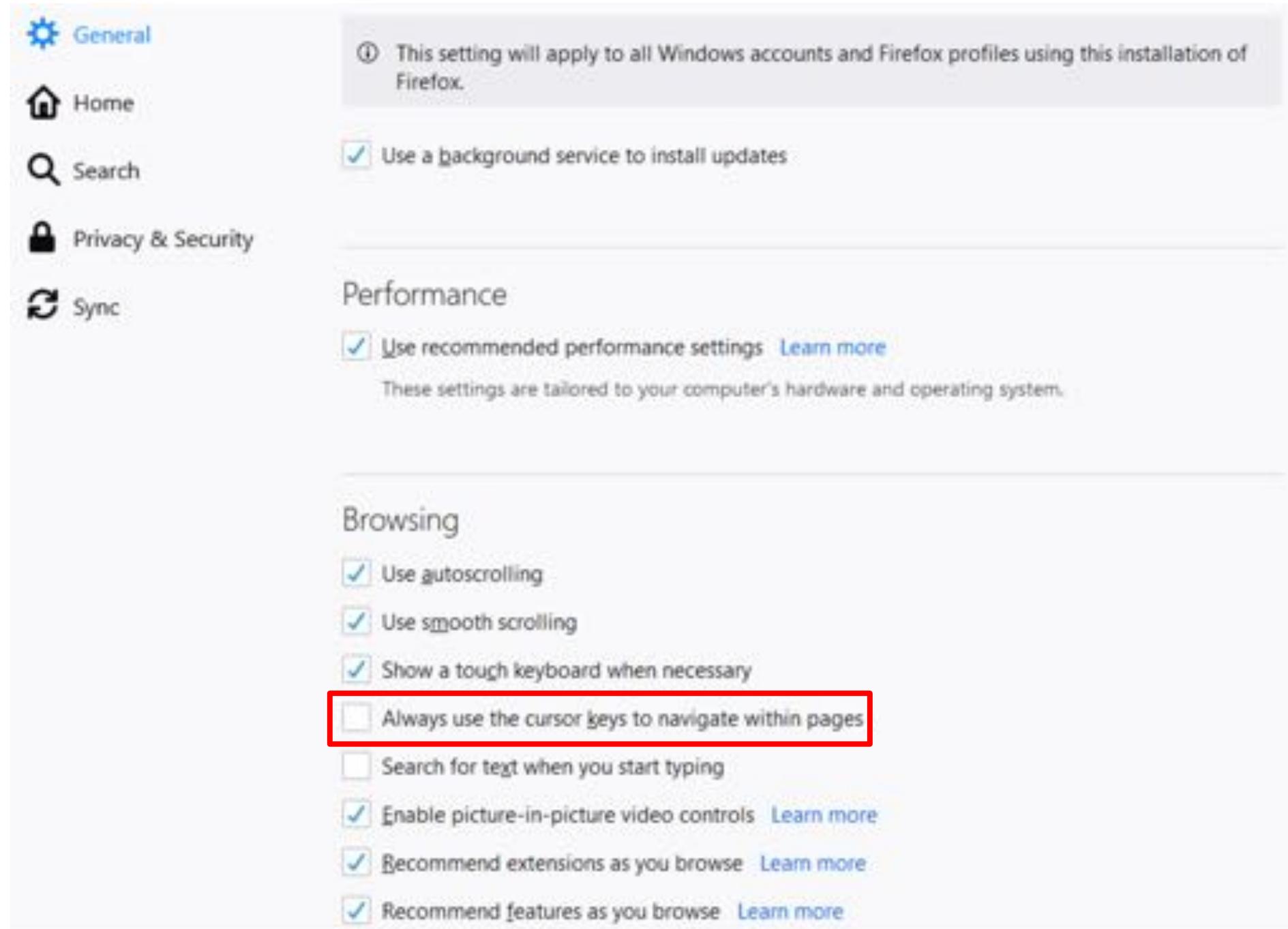
How do you move towards more accessible communication?

# **MAKING YOUR CONTENT MORE ACCESSIBLE**

# Set goals & expectations

- What you want to accomplish
- Timeline
- Staff and roles
- Budget

# Try assistive technology



The image shows the Firefox settings page. On the left is a navigation menu with icons and labels for 'General', 'Home', 'Search', 'Privacy & Security', and 'Sync'. The 'General' section is active. At the top of the settings area, there is a grey informational box stating: 'This setting will apply to all Windows accounts and Firefox profiles using this installation of Firefox.' Below this, there is a checked checkbox for 'Use a background service to install updates'. A horizontal separator line follows. The 'Performance' section has a checked checkbox for 'Use recommended performance settings' with a 'Learn more' link. Below it, a note says: 'These settings are tailored to your computer's hardware and operating system.' Another horizontal separator line follows. The 'Browsing' section contains several options: 'Use autoscrolling' (checked), 'Use smooth scrolling' (checked), 'Show a touch keyboard when necessary' (checked), 'Always use the cursor keys to navigate within pages' (unchecked and highlighted with a red box), 'Search for text when you start typing' (unchecked), 'Enable picture-in-picture video controls' (checked) with a 'Learn more' link, 'Recommend extensions as you browse' (checked) with a 'Learn more' link, and 'Recommend features as you browse' (checked) with a 'Learn more' link.

**General**

ⓘ This setting will apply to all Windows accounts and Firefox profiles using this installation of Firefox.

Use a background service to install updates

---

**Performance**

Use recommended performance settings [Learn more](#)

These settings are tailored to your computer's hardware and operating system.

---

**Browsing**

Use autoscrolling

Use smooth scrolling

Show a touch keyboard when necessary

Always use the cursor keys to navigate within pages

Search for text when you start typing

Enable picture-in-picture video controls [Learn more](#)

Recommend extensions as you browse [Learn more](#)

Recommend features as you browse [Learn more](#)

# Power of RFPs



## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

† District 1 Commissioner Luke Johnson

† District 2 Commissioner Les Nash

† District 3 Commissioner Bruce Koeman

Pipestone County is governed by the Board of Commissioners. These elected officials represent the five districts of the county (Commissioners District Map pdf link) and serve staggered terms of office.

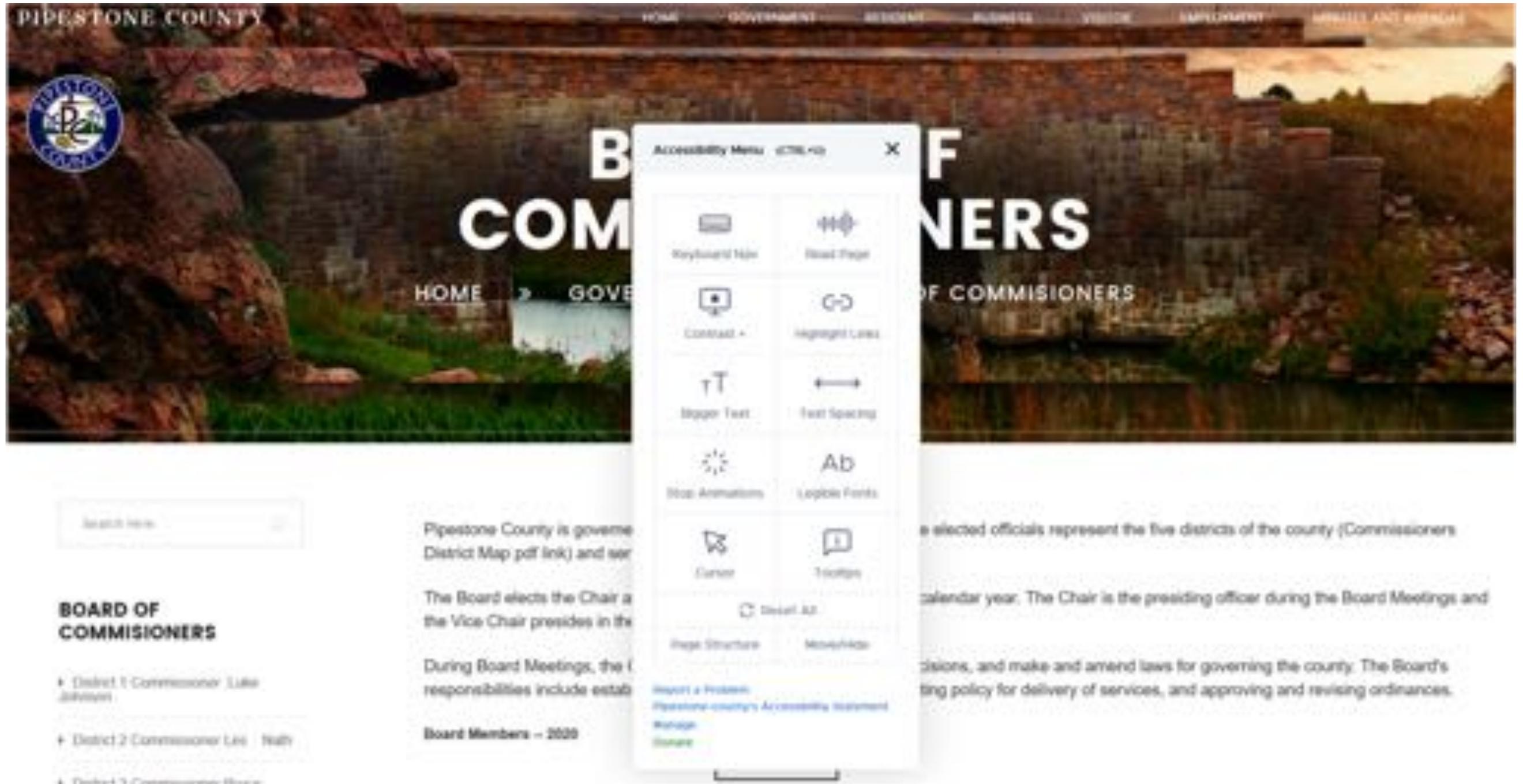
The Board elects the Chair and Vice Chair at the first meeting of the calendar year. The Chair is the presiding officer during the Board Meetings and the Vice Chair presides in the Chair's absence.

During Board Meetings, the Commissioners develop policy, make decisions, and make and amend laws for governing the county. The Board's responsibilities include establishing a county budget and tax levy, setting policy for delivery of services, and approving and revising ordinances.

Board Members – 2026



# Power of RFPs



# Use plain design



Please note, as of March 17, the Inyo County Election's office is closed to all walk-in traffic, until the Covid-19 health emergency has been lifted.

-  Election results
-  Next election: November 3, 2020
-  What's on the ballot
-  Did you get my ballot?
-  Where to vote
-  Register to vote
-  Update your voter registration

# Use plain language

The screenshot shows a text editor interface with a toolbar at the top containing options for Bold, Italic, H1, H2, H3, Quote, Bullets, Numbers, and Link. The main text area contains a paragraph about application deadlines, with several phrases highlighted in yellow and green. To the right, a sidebar displays the Hemingway logo and readability metrics. The readability score is Grade 12, with a note 'OK. Aim for 9'. Below this, there are five colored boxes providing feedback: 0 adverbs (Well done), 3 uses of passive voice (Cut to 1 or fewer), 0 phrases with simpler alternatives, 1 of 3 sentences is hard to read, and 1 of 3 sentences is very hard to read.

Write Edit

## Hemingway

Readability

Grade 12  
OK. Aim for 9.

Words: 71  
Show More

- 0 adverbs. Well done.
- 3 uses of passive voice. Cut to 1 or fewer.
- 0 phrases have simpler alternatives.
- 1 of 3 sentences is hard to read.
- 1 of 3 sentences is very hard to read.

# Don't rely only on PDFs

## Elections

- [Winner Announcement](#)  202KB 2019/11/27
- [Judith Gorman Recount](#)  202KB 2019/11/27
- [Ballot Drop Box Locations w/images](#)  405KB  
2019/10/23
- [Sample Ballot](#)  665KB 2020/01/23
- [Candidates Who Have Filed](#)  32KB 2019/10/18
- [Online Voters Guide](#)
- [Elections Calendar](#)
- [Archived Election Results](#)
- [Key dates in 2020](#)

## Precincts

- [Voter Precincts](#)  [WA](#)

### Register to Vote:

Washington State Elections offers 3 ways to register.

- [VoteWA \(Online\)](#)
- [By Mail](#)
- [In Person](#)

### [Voter's Registration Challenge](#)

# Make links descriptive

If you are using the FPCA to register to vote or update your registration, as well as to request an absentee ballot, your FPCA must be received by the Board by no later than the 21<sup>st</sup> day before an election.

You may also register to vote using the Board's voter registration form online [here](#), or you may download a form [here](#). For more information on how to register to vote, visit our website [here](#).

Instead:

You may register to vote online using the Board's [voter registration form](#). Visit our [register to vote website](#) to learn more.

# Check your contrast

## Election Day is March 3, 2020

Ballots for the Republican Party and Democratic Party Presidential Primaries have been mailed! Anyone with Disabilities who need assistance may vote at the [REDACTED] County Clerk/Auditor's Office located at:

EARLY VOTING held February 25 - February 26 from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM at:  
County Clerk's Office, 160 North Main Room # 113 [REDACTED]

VOTE CENTER on March 3, 2020 from 7 AM to 8 PM at:  
[REDACTED] County Clerk/Auditor's Office 160 North Main Room #113, [REDACTED]

For questions call [REDACTED]

# Add alt text to images

Mobile County Board of Registrars



alt="Mobile County Board of Registrars Group Photo"

# Add captions to videos



# Check font size

## Filing deadlines for county offices:

**Monday, March 2, 2020 through  
Friday, March 20, 2020 5 p.m.**

Non-partisan candidates (click here) for:

- County Supervisor Districts 1, 2, & 5
- County Auditor
- County Sheriff
- Soil & Water Conservation Commission
- Township Trustee

*The offices listed above will be on the November 3, 2020 General Election ballot.*

**Monday, March 2, 2020 through  
Wednesday, March 25, 2020 at 5 p.m.**

Partisan candidates (click here)

(i.e. Democrat or Republican) for:

- County Supervisor District 1, 2, & 5
- County Auditor
- County Sheriff

*The offices listed above will be on the June 2, 2020 Primary Election ballot, with the nominees listed on the November 3, 2020 General Election ballot.*

**Wednesday, August 26, 2020 5 p.m.**

Candidates (non-partisan) (click here) for:

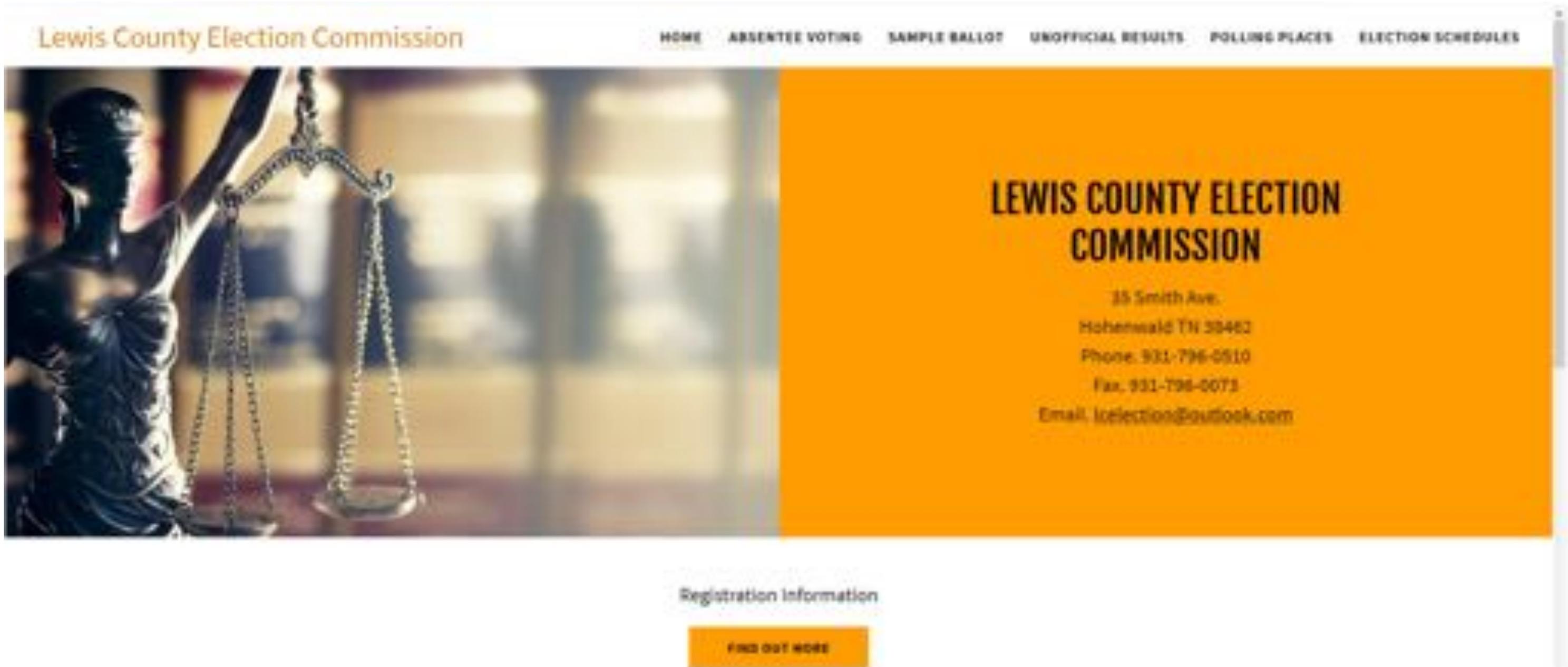
- Agricultural Extension Council
- Partisan (Democrat or Republican) candidates nominated by convention to fill ballot vacancies for:

County Supervisor Districts 1, 2, & 5  
County Auditor  
County Sheriff

# Publicize voting options

The screenshot shows the Pierce County Elections website. On the left is a dark blue navigation menu with the following items: Accessible Voting, Text Version Drop Boxes, Ballot Drop Boxes, Military & Overseas, District Boundaries and Maps, Voter Challenges, and Be a Pierce County Voter. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: Home > Government > Departments A-G > Auditor > Elections > Voter Resources > Accessible Voting. Below this is a prominent banner with a red background on the left and a dark blue background on the right. The red section contains a warning icon (a triangle with an exclamation mark) and the text: "EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY Pierce County Elections is not accepting in-person visitors. We're still here to help, but **ONLY** by phone. You can call us at". The dark blue section contains the phone number "253-798-VOTE (8683)" with a white arrow pointing from the text in the red section to the phone number. Below the banner is a section titled "Voters Living with a Disability" with a red underline. The text below the title reads: "It's easy to register to vote, receive and mark a ballot, and return your ballot. Watch our (CC) and (ASL) accessible video." Below this text is a video player with the title "Voting and Disability Access in Pierce County". The video thumbnail shows a man in a car and a man in a black shirt using sign language. Below the video player is the text: "Voters have the opportunity to mark their ballots privately and independently using assistive ballot marking devices. These devices have a variety of accessibility options including audio, large font, color contrast, touch screen input and tactile input to assist voters in marking a ballot. The machines print out a scannable, marked ballot which the voter can review, the ballot is then placed in an envelope and dropped in a ballot box with other ballots. Ballots are verified and processed at the Election Center, like every other ballot returned through the mail or at a drop box."

# Make contact information prominent



# Test with users

## Usability testing kit

A collection of guidelines and templates to help you check the usability of election materials



Usability testing is a way to learn how easy or difficult it is for people to use something by observing them actually using it.

The resources provided in this kit can help you systematize the process, produce reliable findings, and generally expand your ability to test voting materials thoroughly with real users — before you launch them out into the world.

### CATEGORIES

Communication tools  
Community outreach  
Polling places

### WHAT'S REQUIRED

Technical skills



Time required



Resources



SHARE



**Demo: WebAim WAVE**

# What is WebAim and WAVE?



## WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool

WAVE is a suite of evaluation tools that helps authors make their web content more accessible to individuals with disabilities. WAVE can identify many accessibility and Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) errors, but also facilitates human evaluation of web content. Our philosophy is to focus on issues that we know impact end users, facilitate human evaluation, and to educate about web accessibility.

You can use the online WAVE tool by entering a web page address (URL) in the field above. [WAVE Firefox and Chrome extensions](#) are available for testing accessibility directly within your web browser - handy for checking password protected, locally stored, or highly dynamic pages. We also have a [WAVE Runner service subscription](#), a [WAVE API](#) and a [stand-alone WAVE API](#) for easily collecting data on many pages. If you need enterprise-level reporting and tracking of accessibility, WAVE powers the [Pope.Tech accessibility tool](#).



# Live WAVE demo

Courtney Bailey-Kanelos  
Registrar of Voters  
Sacramento County, CA

# **CASE STUDY: VOTING ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (VAAC)**

# VAAC

- Creation
- Member recruitment

## Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Inquire about the availability of documents in [accessible formats](#).



[Register to Vote](#)



[My Election Information](#)



[My District Information](#)



[Current Election](#)

Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections department has established a citizen advisory committee to make recommendations for improving access to voting and election materials. This Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee, or VAAC, is designed to advise and assist in ensuring all voters in Sacramento County can vote independently and privately.

[Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee Goals](#)

[2019 VAAC Meeting Schedule](#)

For more information on Sacramento County's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee, please email [VAACinfo@saccounty.net](mailto:VAACinfo@saccounty.net) or call Courtney Bailey-Kanelos, VAAC Chair, at (916) 875-6558.

### Membership

To become a member of the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee, please complete the [VAAC Application](#) and email to [VAACinfo@saccounty.net](mailto:VAACinfo@saccounty.net). For information on the desirable qualifications to serve as a member, please read the [Call for Members: Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee](#).

# VAAC topics

- Physical accessibility
- Voting equipment
- Website accessibility
- Alternate formats
- Accessible vote-by-mail and county information guide
- Outreach and demonstrations



# VAAC – Building trust & collaboration

- Listen to the committee
- Be honest
- Keep your word
- Track action items
- Be transparent
- Be a leader



What are your next steps towards greater accessibility?

# GROUP DISCUSSION

# Your plans

- What ideas from today resonated?
- What are your next steps?
- Any “a-ha” moments?

# Questions for us

- What questions do you have about ideas we covered today?
- Do you have an accessibility question that today's course didn't answer?

We've covered a lot today

# WRAPPING UP

# What we covered today

- Learn the principles of accessible communication and how they increase public trust
- Understand how people with disabilities experience information online
- Establish actionable guidelines for making your website more accessible

# Communicating Trusted Election Information

## **Social Media for Voter Engagement**

Thursday, May 14th | 2pm EST

Later this summer...

## **Combating Election Misinformation**

Thursday, July 30th | 2pm EST

[techandciviclifef.org/course/trusted-info/](https://techandciviclifef.org/course/trusted-info/)

# Free COVID-19 Webinars for Election Officials

- May 19 – June 30
- 2 webinars per week (except June 2)
- 60 minutes each, with plenty of time for Q&A
- Sessions are stand-alone: register for what's useful to you
- We'll post the captioned recordings and slides after each webinar

[techandcivicliflife.org/covid-19-webinars/](https://techandcivicliflife.org/covid-19-webinars/)

# Evaluation

- How was your experience with today's course?
- A brief survey is linked in the chat box.
- Please complete the survey now to provide feedback and improve the course for future participants.

# THANK YOU!

Email: [courses@techandcivicle.org](mailto:courses@techandcivicle.org)

Twitter: @HelloCTCL

Website: [www.techandcivicle.org](http://www.techandcivicle.org)

#TrustedInfo2020