

# Accessibility Issues

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), Section 301(a)(3) requires that each polling place provide a method by which the disabled can vote independently. Questions have been raised about what determines whether a system meets this accessibility requirement. On March 17, 2003, the Department of Justice wrote a letter to Alabama Secretary of State Nancy Worley responding to these questions by stating:<sup>1</sup>

The Election Assistance Commission ("EAC") set up under HAVA will eventually issue voluntary voting guidelines and guidance as to what constitutes an accessible voting system. Until that guidance is adopted, the voluntary guidance of the Federal Election Commission on Voting System Standards can be used to determine the accessibility of voting machines. (These can be found at [www.fec.gov/pages/vss/vss.html](http://www.fec.gov/pages/vss/vss.html) at section 2.2.7 of the Voluntary System Standards).

Many voting systems have been qualified by the National Association of State Election Directors, indicating that they meet federal voting system standards. However, most of those systems have only met the standards developed in 1990, which were made obsolete by the enactment of HAVA.

Many counties are purchasing systems that the voting equipment manufacturers claim are accessible to the disabled, but as the above opinion states, **the only basis for determining HAVA compliance is whether or not the system is qualified to the 2002 standards.**

Section 2.7.7.2 of the standards requires that a system provide methods by which the voter can adjust the contrast, the font size, and the color. Therefore, systems that do not provide these features cannot be regarded as complying with the HAVA accessibility requirements.

The table on the back of this page, developed by Verified Voting Foundation ([www.verifiedvotingfoundation.org](http://www.verifiedvotingfoundation.org)), summarizes the accessibility features provided on equipment from major voting system manufacturers. Column titles are explained below.

**Zoom/ Fontsize** allows voters to enlarge the font, so voters with limited vision can more easily read the text.

**Contrast** allows voters to increase or change contrast so text stands out. Helps voters with limited vision.

**Color Shift** allows voters to vary the colors on the screen. Helps voters with color-blindness and limited vision.

**Audio** allows voters to hear the instructions and ballot choices read to them through headphones. Some systems use synthesized voice, while others use human voice. [Note: only the AutoMark offers synchronized audio/video (enables the audio interface to be synchronized to the text being displayed on the screen, an important benefit for voters with a variety of cognitive impairments).]

**Tactile keypad** provides manual controls which may include Braille, specially raised or shaped buttons, etc. to facilitate the selection of choices as the voter goes through the ballot.

**Sip/puff option** provides a type of assistive device known as sip-puff to be attached to the voting system for voters unable to use manual controls or touch screens.

**Languages** provides assistance for voters who speak languages other than English.

**VVPR on all?** indicates whether a voter-verified paper record audit feature is provided as part of every device or as an add-on.

**All units accessible** reflects whether the accessibility features are on each unit, or whether they are optional add-ons.

**Additional features** shows other options or features which enhance accessibility. "VVPR readback" means that the voter can hear an audio readback of the voter-verified paper record itself, not merely an audio readback of the electronic record.

**Meet 2002 standards?** indicates whether the equipment is qualified to the 2002 federal standards adopted by HAVA and therefore can be considered HAVA compliant.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://web.archive.org/web/20030423214900/http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/hava/states\\_ltr.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20030423214900/http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/hava/states_ltr.htm)

Note: Section 2.2.7 is now at this URL: [http://www.eac.gov/election\\_resources/v1/v1s2.doc](http://www.eac.gov/election_resources/v1/v1s2.doc), see page 2-12.

This table, developed by Verified Voting Foundation, can be found at: <http://www.verifiedvotingfoundation.org/article.php?id=6028>

Vendor	Model	Zoom/ Fontsize	Contrast	Color shift	Audio	Tactile keypad	Sip/Puff option	Languages	VVPR on all?	All units accessible	Additional features	Meet 2002 standards?
AccuPoll	AVS 1000	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	always	yes	VVPR readback	yes
AutoMark (ES&S)	ballot marking device	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	always	yes	VVPR readback	yes
Avante	Vote Trakker	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	unlimited	always	yes	VVPR readback	no
Avante	Vote Trakker Full Face	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	unlimited	always	yes	VVPR readback	no
Avante	Optical Vote Trakker	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	unlimited	always	yes	VVPR readback	yes
Diebold	Accuvote TS	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	optional	no		no
Diebold	Accuvote TSx	yes	?	no	yes	no	no	yes	optional	no		no
ES&S	iVotronic	none listed	none listed	none listed	yes	yes	no	yes	optional	no		yes
ES&S	iVotronic LS	yes	yes	none listed	yes	yes	no	yes	optional	no		no
Hart Intercivic	eSlate	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	optional	no	jelly switches	yes
Sequoia	Edge	none listed	none listed	none listed	yes	none listed	no	yes	optional	no		no
Sequoia	Advantage	none listed	none listed	none listed	yes	none listed	no	yes	optional	no		no