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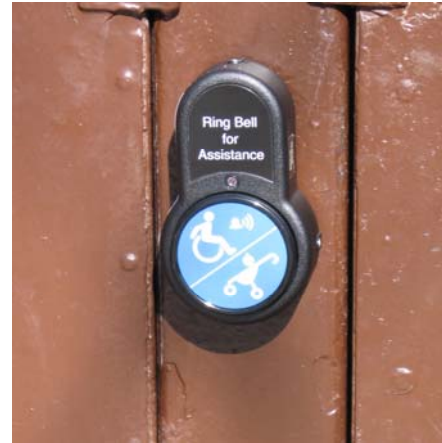
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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Special Election, February 24, 2009 - Poll Site Accessibility Notes

During the Special Election on February 24, 2009, CIDNY visited seven poll sites throughout Senate District 15 to assess compliance with standards set by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the ADA. CIDNY noted improvements at several sites such as the placement of new, large, durable directional accessible entrance signs and wireless doorbells systems, as pictured below. In addition, the Ballot Marking Devices were set up at every site we visited. However, the following summaries of the sites visited describe barriers, both physical and attitudinal, still faced by voters with disabilities. Poll workers at nearly every site revealed that there is a tremendous need for training on the BMDs and disability awareness.



PS 64, Joseph P. Addabbo School

82-01 101 Avenue, Queens

1. The entrance had heavy doors and no bell for someone to request assistance.
2. The elevator provides access to the poll site on the second floor for individuals with mobility impairments. The door clerk said that the elevator has broken down almost every election in the past three years. There were lawn mowers stored in front of the elevator in such a way that there was not the 36" clearance required by the ADA. The principal was notified and said she would ask the janitor to move them. She also mentioned that the elevator broke down during elections.
3. The poll worker trained on the BMD was out for lunch. Another poll worker said that they were told not to offer the BMD to voters.



4. Along the pathway to the BMD, there was a place where tables and chairs narrowed the route to less than 36". When this was pointed out, poll workers made more room. This is an example of the need for more poll worker training.

PS 63

90-15 Sutter Avenue, Queens

1. The ramp to the entrance was too steep. The 6 foot long ramp was made for a 6 inch rise but had an 11 inch rise. The BOE was contacted about this and later informed CIDNY that the site did not use the Poll Room designated by the BOE, and therefore deviated from the accessible pathway that the BOE had selected for this site.
2. The poll worker said that the policy regarding informing voters about the BMDs is, "don't ask, don't tell."



PS 202 JHS

138-30 Lafayette Street, Queens

1. Initially, there were no signs to direct voters from the main entrance to the alternate, accessible entrance. BOE workers arrived around 3PM and put up clear, large and durable accessible entrance signage.
2. There was a 2 inch lip at the start of the ramp, impeding access for someone using a wheelchair or scooter.
3. Initially, there was no way for a voter at the accessible entrance to request assistance negotiating the heavy entrance door. The door monitor was inside and said it was too cold to stay outside. The BOE workers that arrived around 3PM installed a doorbell system.
4. The path from the accessible entrance to the voting area led through an office. The pathway around the office counter was narrowed by the placement of a copy machine. The space was much too narrow for someone using a wheelchair to get through (see photo).



5. None of the poll workers were trained on the BMD. One poll worker said that the BMDs were a waste of tax payer money. She also said they were too complicated. The BMD was placed so that a voter would not have had privacy while using it. This underscores the need for poll worker training so they understand the reason for the BMDs and feel comfortable using them.



PS 210 JHS

93-11 101 Avenue, Queens

1. The poll worker trained on the BMD was out for lunch. Another poll worker said that they were told not to offer the BMD to voters. The BMD was placed less than 3 feet from the wall, when there should be 5 feet of space to provide access to the BMD. This is another example of the need for better poll worker training.

PS 60

91-02 88 Avenue, Queens

1. None of the poll workers were trained on the BMD. However, several poll workers said they were curious about it and took the time to figure out on their own how it works. One of the poll workers expressed a desire to learn more about how to assist voters with disabilities. She said she was told not to give assistance, such as opening doors, to people with disabilities. This is another example of the need for better poll worker training.

Woodhaven Amb Corp

78-15 Jamaica Avenue, Queens

1. There were no problems noted at this poll site.

PS 97

85-52 85 Street, Queens

1. There were no problems noted at this poll site.