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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

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Quick Takes

Automatic Voter Registration is Coming, But Will It Be Accessible?

What if you were able to register or update your voter registration any time you went to a government agency like Social Security, the Department of Health, or SNAP? In May, the Brennan Center for Justice held an all day conference on Automatic Voter Registration (AVR). AVR may be familiar to New Yorkers because you can already register to vote when you get or renew a driver's license or a non-driver ID. This is often referred to as Motor/Voter. In fact, in New York State you can fill in your voter registration form online or at the Department of Motor Vehicles, print it, sign it, and send it in to the Board of Elections. However, a problem many of us face is that these forms are not screen readable and if you have difficulty filling out forms or signing them, you may not be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

Voting rights advocates and policy makers across the country are now looking at allowing states to offer voter registration through other government agencies. Some states are considering widening the ability to offer voter registration through non-profits as well. The idea is that anyone who has an interaction with any of these agencies will be asked if they are registered to vote. If they say no, they will be asked if they want to register. If they say yes, staff let them know that the agency can pass along their information to the Board of Elections who would then register them to vote.

Four states so far have passed AVR legislation: Oregon, California, West Virginia and Vermont. Representatives from these states talked about the various issues that they had to consider while creating and implementing



the law. Happily, almost all the panelists mentioned accessibility as one issue that needed to be addressed early in the creation and implementation of automatic voter registration.

Making the process accessible for people who use screen readers or who need help filling in forms, ensuring that information sent between agencies and the boards of election is confidential, and ensuring that people who do not want to be registered are not registered by mistake were issues each of the states mentioned. AVR and online registration are part of modernizing the U.S. voting system. Next in line, according to the advocates, will be portable registration, which means you would be able to update and maintain your registration online when you move. Many states are also considering online voting. Panelists noted that states and advocates and policy makers must consider issues for people with disabilities as they create the process. An equally accessible option must be available to people with disabilities who cannot afford or do not have computers, any online materials and forms must be accessible to people with disabilities, and data given to any agency must be confidential and protected.

What do you think? Would registering to vote through any government agency make registration easier for you? Would you like to be able to register completely online? What do you think about online voting? These and other questions about modernizing our voting systems are being considered now. Our voices for accessibility have to be part of the discussion. For more information on this and other voting issues, contact Monica Bartley at mbartley@cidny.org or 646-442-4152.

CIDNY Goes to Albany!

On May 16, 2016, CIDNY consumers and staff went to Albany to participate in New York State Assembly Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day. CIDNY consumers shared their stories and discussed policy issues with Assembly Members Catherine Nolan, Aravella Simotas, Helene Weinstein, Philip Goldfeder, Robin Schimminger, Michaelle Solages, Michael Blake, Pamela Harris, Andrew Hevesi, David Carlucci, Kevin Cahill, Marcos Crespos and Senators Kevin Parker, Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Liz Krueger, Adriano Espaillat, Jessie Hamilton, Simcha Felder, Todd Kaminsky, Bill Perkins, Kemp Hannon, Marty Golden,

CIDNY CONSUMER ACTION NETWORK MEETING—Wednesday, June 15 — 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
CIDNY-Queens, 80-02 Kew Gardens Road, Suite 107, Kew Gardens, Queens

By Subway: Take the E or the F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens – this station has an elevator.

Bus: Take the Q10, Q37, Q46, Q60, Q74, x63, x68 and exit at Union Turnpike – Kew Gardens Station.

Come join us to hear about: Our trip to Albany; the legislators we met; and the issues we presented to them. Also let us discuss our issues and concerns with the City and prepare for our visits to City officials.

Únase con nosotros para hablar de: Nuestro viaje a Albany; los legisladores que nos encontramos; y los problemas que se les presentan.

También vamos a discutir nuestros problemas y preocupaciones con la Ciudad y prepararse para nuestras visitas a funcionarios de la ciudad.

RSVP to the CAN meeting by Wednesday, June 8 to Eva Eason at 212-674-2300 and let her know if you need an accommodation like large print, Braille, or an interpreter, including ASL. Please be considerate to people dealing with chemical sensitivity disorders and refrain from wearing cologne or perfume at our meetings and events.

Gustavo Rivera, and Tony Avella. Most of the legislators and staff members were receptive to the issues our consumers discussed, and some agreed to co-sponsor the bills relating to some of the issues that were presented. These are some of our issues:

The need to preserve access to quality complex rehabilitation technology for patients with complex rehabilitation medical needs. We are asking the state to pass a law that would ensure that individuals with complex needs and chronic disabling conditions get the equipment that addresses their specific disability so they can remain mobile, safe, and healthy. Also, Medicaid Managed Care Plans should use suppliers who have at least one storefront in NY State, have certified technicians on staff, and are able to individually fit, service and repair complex rehabilitation equipment.

The need for legislation that would allow for a prescriber override of “step therapy” protocols. Some people with disabilities may have serious illnesses or chronic conditions that require a complex combination of medications, or only a particular drug is effective, or alternative drugs may have unacceptable side effects. We are asking for the State to pass a law that would add a new article to the insurance law, which gives prescribers access to a clear and convenient process to override step therapy and “fail first” restrictions when medically in the best interests of the patient.

Support Prohibition of Source of Income Discrimination. NYC has a law that protects people who receive income from government entities (such as Section 8, SSI, or SSDI) from being discriminated against when applying for housing - we are asking to put that law into the State Human Rights Law, so everyone in the State will have the same protection.

Our request to develop a policy requiring State contractors to employ people with disabilities. We are asking the State to pass a law requiring all State contractors and subcontractors to recruit and hire people with disabilities so that we can improve job opportunities. This law is similar to the national regulation that establishes a goal for contractors

receiving federal contracts to achieve a 7 percent hiring rate for qualified employees with disabilities.

Access-A-Ride and Lack of Due Process. Consumers spoke about their issues with Access-a-Ride; in particular, the need for annual recertification and how Access-A-Ride denies services or does not recertify. The only appeal mechanism is through Access-a-Ride, so we are asking for outside agency to review appeals.

Create Independent Special Counsel to review deaths in custody. People with mental disabilities are at higher risk of death in custody. We urged the Legislature to support the creation of an Independent Special Counsel to investigate this occurrence.

Will NYC Have to Fix Its Curbs and Sidewalks? Hearing set for Tuesday, May 31, on a proposed settlement in the curb cut case. We say: It isn't good enough!

On Tuesday, May 31, CIDNY will testify in federal court that a proposed settlement of our curb cut case does not meet the needs of people with disabilities. Federal Judge Daniels will hear comments on the agreement between the City of New York and United Spinal. Join us!

The settlement leaves too many people out. It:

- Does not require installation or repair of curb ramps unless or until a street is repaved – leaving large portions of the city without remedies to inaccessible sidewalks.
- Has no requirement to ensure detectable warnings on curb cuts for people who are blind or low vision.
- Does nothing to fix potholes, cracked concrete or problems where the curb cuts meet the street.
- Does not include monitoring so we can see and act if the city is not complying with the settlement.
- There are no deadlines.
- There is no clear procedure for registering a complaint.

This settlement won't do. New York City can and must do better.

If you feel strongly about the conditions of the curb cuts in NYC, join us at 12:00 pm in Courtroom 11A, 500 Pearl Street, to say NO! to this settlement. Make sure you bring a picture ID – you will need that to go through security. The accessible entrance is on 158 Worth Street.