

The Uniform Voting Experience

Title III of HAVA (Help America Vote Act) calls for “Uniform and Nondiscriminatory Election Technology and Administration Requirements”. We’re calling this the Uniform Voting Experience.

Title II of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) supports this by requiring programs and services provided by local and state government to be accessible to people with disabilities.

In our age of inexpensive touch screens, providing such a uniform voting experience must not be done through half-hearted accommodations that do not meet individuals’ desires and rights for independent access to all aspects of the voting process.

Human assisted accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act are intended to provide access when it is not available without substantial burden of cost or effort. Human assistance was never intended to be a substitute for independent access when technology can provide it at a reasonable cost or at no cost. Access through technology is now a matter of requiring it as a standard on the part of government purchasing.

In the election field as in others, building in accessibility is no longer an inventive art form, but rather a design consideration utilizing existing technologies. This also means that it is no longer a major cost factor that must drive up the price of systems. This is especially true if all systems have accessibility built in from the start.

The extension of the uniform voting experience must now go beyond the single act of casting a ballot as technology takes hold throughout our daily lives. The check-in process at the polls is one where technology can be shown to work smoothly to the benefit of all concerned. VOTEC designs are getting rave reviews.

The sheer volume of legal notice requirements is putting tremendous pressure on the recruiting, training and retention of poll workers who can deliver their services with the appearance and actuality of complete competence and even handedness.

The implementation of computer driven voter check-in kiosks offers a resolution to this issue.

Kiosks Satisfy All Your Stakeholders

An electronic kiosk puts the check-in process in the hands of the voter. It also provides each voter with the desired and required uniform voting experience:

- By providing them all legal notices in the same way as every other voter.
- By allowing them to verify their personal information privately and independently.
- By walking voters through the steps needed to receive their ballot in a uniform way.
- By providing all information and choices in an accessible format and chosen language.

It can do all these things while relieving the poll worker of many tedious tasks:

- It frees the poll worker from sworn responsibility for perfect delivery of legal statements.
- It frees the poll worker from debating with individual voters the voting path they must take.
- It improves the poll workers ability to communicate with the voter.

It does all this while supporting election administrators:

- By reducing poll worker training and turnover.
- By no longer making legal requirements and notices subject to being filtered through poll workers with their own views and prejudices and stamina.
- By engaging every voter in the entire process from check-in to voting while meeting the individual needs of each voter regardless of their language or accessibility needs.
- By creating a uniform check-in which is part of the voting experience that meets the requirements of the law and smooths out the process into a faster and more enjoyable experience.
- Voter check-in kiosks can do all these things and more provided all voters are taken into account during the requirements writing and procurement process. Provided the spirit of the uniform voting experience in the Help America Vote Act is followed. Provided Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act is honored.