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**From:** Robert R Planthold[SMTP:political\_bob@juno.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 02, 2002 4:46 AM  
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lfcalderson@yahoo.com; ciapasf@yahoo.com; jessie@ilrcsf.org  
**Subject:** Fw: FW: IDA & GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Adina Topfer" <adinatopfer@earthlink.net>

I forward this e-mail so you understand there's a constituency other than the blind / low-vision who have a need for audible voting technology--those with dyslexia. Look in the middle of the 2nd page of this attachment for the reference.

So, the numbers are growing for those who absolutely NEED accessible voting technology for compliance with their right to a scerte ballot.

Bob Planthold

Date: Thu, 20 Jun 2002 14:25:00 -0400  
Subject: FW: IDA & GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

Attached is a great letter from the president of the International Dyslexia Association, going out in their quarterly newsletter. Note the AAPD figures and reference.

Erik Darcey  
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-----Original Message-----

From: J. Thomas Viall [<mailto:JTViall@interdys.org>]  
Sent: Wednesday, June 19, 2002 3:55 PM  
To: 'adinatopfer@earthlink.net'  
Subject: IDA & GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

Eric:

Please see the attached "President's" column which will run in our Summer issue of "Perspectives," which goes to approximately 15,000 people. I think you'll find it of interest.

<<Get the LD Community Vote Out in 2002.doc>>

Best . . .

T.

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Get the LD Community Vote Out in 2002 . . .  
*Support Candidates that Support You!*

Throughout my tenure as President of The International Dyslexia Association (IDA), I have been proud to lead IDA to a more influential role in the legislative arena. We are working independently as well as collaboratively with other learning disability (LD) organizations to advance critical issues relative to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This is, no doubt, important, but there is also no doubt that this effort represents half the battle. We also need to exercise our political strength in the voting booth. We need to elect officials who are sensitive to the needs of our community, support existing legislation that protects our rights, AND sponsor new legislation to enhance the fullest possible participation of people with disabilities in the life of our country.

Let me be clear, our goal is not to support a political party or any specific candidate. There are many Democrats, Independents, and Republicans who deserve our support at the polls based upon their voting records on issues germane to our community. My intent is to raise awareness within the LD community so the millions of people with dyslexia (as well as those who work with them and care about them) educate themselves to the positions congressional candidates are taking on our issues.

Given my concern regarding this matter, I recently asked our executive director to attend a meeting sponsored by the American Association for People with Disabilities (AAPD). The "Voting and Election Summit" was sponsored by AAPD to help coordinate the get-out-the-vote efforts of a wide variety of disability rights groups. I am eternally grateful to AAPD for their leadership.

Let me quote a few statistics that came out of that meeting:

- People with disabilities are the largest single minority in the country. According to a 1997 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 53 million Americans have some sort of disability.
- According to the 2000 Census, 23.3% of the voting age population in the U.S. has a disability.
- 23% of people with disabilities say that a candidate's position on disability issues is the primary factor in deciding to vote for that candidate. 48% said it was one of the top 3 factors.
- Historically, only 17% of people with disabilities vote in non-presidential elections.
- In the 1988 presidential election, George Bush won by a 7% margin. Analysis of disability voting patterns suggests that 1 to 3% of the electoral margin came from the disability community because he promised to sign the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).\*

What can we learn from these numbers? As trite as it may sound, every vote counts and we are not voting in sufficient numbers. It is true that for many people with disabilities, the critical issue is access to the polling place. It is also true that for people with learning disabilities, specifically dyslexia which manifests itself most commonly as a reading disability, the issues are somewhat different. Accordingly, I would like to stress the following two points:

People with dyslexia must exercise their right to vote. I don't have statistics that identify the number of people with a reading disability who stay away from the polls, but logic tells us the number may be significant. As a result, we are losing political capital *and that must stop*.

I am asking our membership and constituency to reach out to family, friends, and neighbors who may be hesitant to put themselves into a potentially embarrassing situation. There are things you can do to prepare for the voting booth.

- Seek assistance in reviewing the sample ballots that are sent out; you'll be able to rehearse for the actual voting experience.
- Watch TV and listen to the radio as well as colleagues – learn the positions of candidates on such matters as IDEA and ADA. Find out if they are proposing new legislation that will promote such things as accommodations in the workplace.
- Write (use your speech-to-text software or a family member, if needed) to the candidates and ask for their positions on these matters.

Get informed and then go to the polling place.

Remember, if necessary, you have the right to ask for assistance in the voting booth. Please don't give up your right to vote; use all the protections afforded you.

All Americans are guaranteed the right to voting by secret ballot. When you seek assistance however, you are giving up that constitutional right. While I would argue the loss is worth the gain, I want IDA to actively seek reforms that will provide the kind of accessibility people with dyslexia need when voting. To that end, I have instructed our executive director to participate in upcoming meetings within the disability community to address this issue. For example, computer-voting technology (with auditory accommodations) will serve our community as well as others. There is no reason why every polling place in America could not have such equipment available for citizens who have such a need.

The election process is the most fundamental of democratic rights and responsibilities. The disability community at-large and the community of dyslexics, in particular, must be proactive this year.

I urge us all to do everything we can to increase our turnout, make our voices heard, and make our wishes a reality.

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\* Information taken from "How to Turn Out the Vote," a non-partisan, get-out-the-vote manual published by the National Organization on Disability