



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois

Joel R. Levin
Acting United States Attorney

Everett McKinley Dirksen United States Courthouse
219 South Dearborn Street, 5th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353-5300

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT WITH CHICAGO BOARD OF ELECTIONS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

CHICAGO — The United States Attorney’s Office today announced a settlement with the Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago to ensure accessibility of polling sites to persons with disabilities.

The agreement requires the Board of Elections to ensure that every polling site is accessible to persons with disabilities by the Nov. 6, 2018, election. The Board will provide training to all precinct coordinators on how to install and maintain any temporary equipment and accessibility items, such as wheelchair ramps, accessible parking or the placement of mats over thresholds. On Election Day and during early-voting periods the Board must maintain in working order all facilities and equipment, including lifts, elevators and ramps, that are needed to make polling sites accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The Board cooperated with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to voluntarily reach the settlement agreement without the need for a lawsuit.

The settlement agreement, which became effective on April 11, 2017, was announced by Joel R. Levin, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

“The right of individuals to participate in our democratic system of government includes full and equal access to polling sites,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Levin. “This agreement represents an important step toward guaranteeing voting access to all of our citizens.”

In 2016 the Board oversaw 1,452 polling sites that housed 2,069 precincts, and also operated 50 additional sites for early voting in the 40 days leading up to the election. Pursuant to the ADA

and Illinois law, all polling places must be accessible to voters with disabilities. In the spring of 2016 the Department of Justice reviewed more than 100 polling places in Chicago and concluded that many have architectural barriers that make them inaccessible to voters who use wheelchairs or have mobility impairments, or voters who are blind or have vision impairments.

In response to the Department's initial findings, the Board expressed its commitment to making all polling locations accessible to voters with disabilities, and it retained Equip for Equality to inspect an additional 1,000 Chicago polling sites. In the November 2016 election, Equip for Equality found additional polling sites that were not accessible to voters with disabilities. Pursuant to the settlement agreement, the Board will continue to engage Equip for Equality or some other third-party expert as a consultant to review polling sites and determine whether alternative locations should be used.

Although the United States agreed not to presently institute a civil action alleging discrimination under the ADA, it may review the Board's compliance with the settlement at any time during the four-year duration of the agreement. If the United States believes the agreement has been violated, it reserved the right to institute a civil action in the appropriate U.S. District Court to enforce the agreement.

The United States is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick W. Johnson.

Title II of the ADA prohibits public entities, such as the Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago, from discriminating against people with disabilities in their programs, services and activities. With respect to polling places, public entities are required to select and use polling places that are accessible. To learn more about the ADA and other laws protecting the rights of voters with disabilities, log on to www.ada.gov/ta-pubs-pg2.htm or call the Justice Department's toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TDD).

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