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**Accessible Absentee Registration Process and Voting System Now Available**

*Voters with Disabilities Can Vote Privately and Independently*

The NH Secretary of State's Office launches accessible absentee registration process and voting system for people with print disabilities. Until now, voters with print disabilities who were unable to register to vote or mark a paper absentee ballot themselves had to rely on assistance to complete their registration form and ballot.

The new registration process allows voters who are blind or have print disabilities to complete an accessible registration form without assistance. The new voting system allows voters who are blind or have print disabilities to request and fill out an absentee ballot privately and independently during the September 8<sup>th</sup> state primary election and the November 3<sup>rd</sup> general elections.

To request an accessible registration form, voters should contact their City or Town Clerk or complete the application for an electronic absentee ballot. Access the accessible absentee ballot application at <https://sos.nh.gov/media/bp5lbgvp/application-for-an-accessible-electronic-absentee-ballot.pdf>. Voters should visit the NH Secretary of State's website (<https://sos.nh.gov/elections/voters/register-to-vote/absentee/accessible-voting/>) for more specific information and instructions about how to request, mark, and return the accessible absentee ballot.

This system was created as a result of a lawsuit filed by [Disability Rights Center-New Hampshire](#) (DRC-NH) and [Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP](#) on behalf of New Hampshire voters with disabilities, including Daniel Frye, Jean Shiner, and Jeffrey Dickinson; the National Federation of the Blind (NFB); the National Federation of the Blind of New Hampshire (NFBNH); and Granite State Independent Living (GSIL). The lawsuit alleges that the process for registering by mail and requesting an absentee ballot is inaccessible and that the requirement that absentee voters fill out and mail in a paper form and a printed paper ballot discriminates against blind and physically disabled voters, who – unlike their nondisabled fellow voters – must choose between having someone else fill out their registration form and/or ballot, forfeiting their right to vote

privately and independently, or subjecting themselves and their loved ones to a life-threatening pandemic by visiting a polling place in person.

“As we continue our national fight to secure the right of all blind voters to mark and cast our ballots safely, privately, and independently, we are pleased that New Hampshire will now be joining the growing number of states with an accessible absentee voting system in place,” said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. “We urge all eligible voters who are blind or have other disabilities to exercise their right to vote using the method that best meets their needs.”

“We are very pleased that the Secretary of State implemented an accessible registration process and voting system so quickly. People with disabilities have the right to vote privately and independently, even during a pandemic and now they can do so,” said Stephanie Patrick, Executive Director of DRC-NH.

“GSIL is grateful for the swift action of the Secretary of State to address accessibility issues ahead of the primary and general elections,” said Deborah Ritcey, Chief Executive Officer. “The innovations underway will ensure that individuals with disabilities have full access to their fundamental right to vote. We want to thank DRC-NH for its advocacy to ensure people with disabilities can fully participate in democracy despite the pandemic.”

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### **About the National Federation of the Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), headquartered in Baltimore, is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind Americans. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The NFB defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality. Learn more about our many programs and initiatives at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org).

### **About Disability Rights Center-NH**

Disability Rights Center-NH is New Hampshire’s designated Protection and Advocacy system and is dedicated to eliminating barriers existing in New Hampshire to the full and equal enjoyment of civil and other legal rights by people with disabilities. More information about DRC-NH can be found at [www.drcnh.org](http://www.drcnh.org).

### **About Granite State Independent Living**

Granite State Independent Living is New Hampshire’s statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote quality of life with independence for people with disabilities and seniors through advocacy, information, education, support and transition services. GSIL serves as the designated statewide independent living organization. More information about GSIL can be found at [www.gsil.org](http://www.gsil.org).