



PROTECTING THE VOTE FOR ALL AMERICANS

Louisiana House of Representatives  
House And Governmental Affairs Committee  
Box 94062 (900 N. 3rd Street)  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

*Submitted via email*

April 19, 2022

Dear Chairman Stefanski and Vice Chair Duplessis:

Fair Elections Center<sup>1</sup> writes in support of HCR 14, which is currently scheduled for a hearing on April 19, 2022, as well as any amendments to the resolution that would increase the representation of voters with disabilities on the task force. The Center respectfully requests that this letter be entered into the record as written testimony.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one-third of Louisiana adults live with a disability.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Louisiana law and election administration practices have created unnecessary barriers that make it more difficult for these residents to cast their ballots, including burdensome documentary proof of disability requirements to receive federally-guaranteed voting assistance and to vote by mail, and inaccessible polling sites.<sup>3</sup> There have been documented cases of “disabled voters not [being] allowed voting assistants of their choice and poll workers making competency determinations on a disabled person’s ability to vote” when voting in person.<sup>4</sup> A Government Accountability Office survey of early voting and Election Day polling places in the 2016 General Election found that, nationwide, 83 percent of polling places “had one or more potential impediments anywhere from (1) parking, (2) the path to the

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<sup>1</sup> Fair Elections Center is a national, nonpartisan voting rights and election reform 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to use litigation, education, and advocacy to remove barriers to registration and voting, particularly those disenfranchising underrepresented and marginalized communities, and to improve election administration. Since 2012, Fair Elections Center has operated Campus Vote Project to help students understand and exercise their right to vote.

<sup>2</sup> *Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Louisiana (Adults 18+ years of age)*, CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/louisiana.html> (last updated June 28, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> *Barriers to Voting in Louisiana*, La. Advisory Comm. for the U.S. Comm’n on Civil Rts. 16 (June 2018), available at <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/2018/08-20-LA-Voting-Barriers.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 32.

building entrance, (3) the entrance, or (4) the path from the entrance to the voting area.”<sup>5</sup> Of those polling places, 41 percent did not offer curbside voting.<sup>6</sup> And although voters with disabilities who reported difficulties voting fell from 30 percent in 2012 to 18 percent in 2020, turnout among voters with disabilities still lagged that of voters without disabilities by 7 percentage points.<sup>7</sup>

HCR 14 would make important strides toward addressing these disparities by establishing “a task force to study the voting rights of persons with disabilities and the procedures available to assist voters with disabilities to cast their votes, including any means available, or that might be made available, to facilitate voting by persons with disabilities and any impediments that exist to voting by such persons.” At minimum, the task force must consider opportunities for providing curbside voting and other accommodations “to streamline the processes for voters with disabilities to receive assistance when voting.” Members would include the Director of the Office of Disability Affairs, the Secretary of State, and the Commissioner of Elections. The following bodies and individuals (or their designees) would also each appoint one person to the task force: the Clerks of Court Association, the Registrars of Voters Association, the Secretary of the Department of Health, the Executive Director of Disability Rights Louisiana, the Chief Executive Officer of the Split Second Foundation, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, the Executive Director of the Arc of Louisiana, and the Executive Director of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice. The resolution also requires the task force to submit a report providing its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by February 1, 2023.

Fair Elections Center strongly supports this resolution, as well as any amendments that would increase the representation of people with disabilities on the task force and ensure that the voices of Louisiana’s disability community are fully and directly heard. At a time when many states are enacting legislation that adds voting barriers for people with disabilities, HCR 14 offers Louisiana the opportunity to lead on this issue and strengthen its elections by working to guarantee all voters can participate.

Thank you very much for allowing the Center to express its support for HCR 14. Please feel welcome to contact me at (202) 331-0114 or [caguilera@fairelectionscenter.org](mailto:caguilera@fairelectionscenter.org) if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

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**Fair Elections Center**  
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<sup>5</sup> *Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance*, GAO 14–15 (Oct. 2017), available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687556.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Schur et al., *Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections: Final Report on Survey Results*, RUTGERS UNIV. 1 (Feb. 16, 2021), <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/voting-accessibility-in-2020-elections.pdf>.