



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alameda County Will Make Voting More Accessible to the Blind *County Reaches Agreement with Blind Voters, National Federation of the Blind*

Oakland, California (November 2, 2018): Alameda County has agreed to take necessary and timely steps to provide equal opportunity for participation by blind voters in the County's voting program. The agreement resolves complaints by three blind voters who live in the county. The National Federation of the Blind, the nation's leading advocate for the voting rights of blind people, is also a party to the agreement, and will work with the county to help it implement accessible voting technology and other components of the agreement.

The steps that Alameda County has agreed to take include:

- Acquiring a remote accessible vote-by-mail system in time for use in the November 2018 election;
- Acquiring new accessible voting machines for all polling places in time for use in the March 2020 primary election;
- Instituting improved poll worker training and response processes for issues that affect a voter's ability to privately and independently operate a voting machine; and
- Ensuring that the County's election website, including content such as sample ballots and voter information pamphlets, is accessible per the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1 AA, with pre-2018 archived PDFs to be made accessible upon request.

Accessible voting machines use touch screens with features such as color and font size adjustment and/or speech output through headphones and a tactile keypad to guide blind voters through marking a paper or electronic ballot. A remote accessible vote-by-mail system can be used alongside Braille or screen reader technology, which reads the text on a computer's screen as spoken words, to allow blind voters to mark their absentee or vote-by-mail ballots without assistance on their own computers. The ballot can then be printed and mailed to the local board of elections. The system will also benefit voters who are deaf-blind or who have other disabilities that prevent them from visiting a polling place or marking a traditional ballot. Individuals wishing to use the remote accessible vote-by-mail system for the November 6, 2018 election can access it from the [Voter Profile](#) section of the Alameda County registrar of Voters website.

"We are pleased to have reached this comprehensive agreement with Alameda County," said Tim Elder, president of the National Federation of the Blind of California and one of the voters who filed a complaint with the county. "This agreement will not only benefit blind and deafblind voters in Alameda County, but will hopefully serve as a model for other voting jurisdictions as they work to meet their legal obligations to these voters."

The complainants were represented by Jessica P. Weber of the Baltimore firm Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP.

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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.

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