



THE INDEPENDENT

*the hardest battle is to be nobody-but-yourself
in a world that is trying to make you like everybody else.*

e.e. cummings

Fall 2006, VOL.19 NO.3

The Ongoing Saga of the Help America Vote Act: Politics and Misplaced Policies

By Tom Siblo-Landsman, NYS Systems Advocate

If you have not heard anything about the Help America Vote Act before now, it is because the leaders of our state government are failing us again, but this time it is due to the ambiguity within state law and regulations that implement the new federal law providing \$275 million dollars to New York State to assist in upgrading and removing barriers to people with disabilities who are treated like second class citizens when they receive an absentee ballot or ask for assistance in pulling down levers on the full faced ballot.

Since the 2000 election Americans have witnessed the collapse and failure of the great majority of the voting infrastructure all over the US. Misplaced uncounted votes, inaccessible ballots and a total failure of proper tabulation of all the votes of an entire parish, district, and precinct are the largest concerns. There are allegations of voting fraud, and preventing people voting based on an alleged violent felony record thus removing people from casting their ballot. Its a reality that in certain traditional communities

the votes are not counted or included in the final results.

The right to vote and exercising these rights are essential parts of what makes this nation exceptional. The one person one vote concept is an historical necessity for any modern democracy and illustrates just how important they way people exercise their right is to the future of the people. It is one thing to request an absentee ballot and quite another to be told if you are disabled we can provide to you an alternative of filing an absentee ballot. Much of what is happening to our election systems is taking place by subversion rather than policy.

Election reform over the years has been on the agenda in Congress since the passage of the 1964 Voters Rights and the Civil Rights Equal Opportunity Laws. This year Congress must extend the original law in order for it to remain as strong as it can be. However, the federal law in New York State appears to undermine the laws. Elections are not clean. Congressmen and Senators, President are financing their campaigns completely with contributions of corporations seeking a favored status. The closer we think we are getting close to creating what is a better election system the further away we get.

When New York State government passed HAVA the legislature and governor could have given more specific instructions to the New York State and County Board of Elections. Instead of giving them a law which specifically stated clearly the standards of barrier free machines and

stressing importance of creating accessible polling places, government officials remained silent.

The lack of an accurate reporting system has resulted in a major under representation of the number of voters with disabilities who have voted in the past. Without such accurate reporting we need to make every effort to confront our legislative leaders to take more of a responsibility in directing the NYS Board of Elections to instruct the County Boards to provide truly accurate information in order to plan what is needed to make all of our polling sites as well as the voting machines fully accessible and achieve 100% of the HAVA requirements. As it stands now the U.S. Attorney General's office might move forward with their litigation and fine New York State millions of dollars for non-compliance. This would be unfortunate, of course, because it would create more of a fiscal crisis for the taxpayers of this state.

In the weeks ahead we are going to compile more information about the real demographics of voters with disabilities. I will most certainly pass this information forward to you. It is clear that the leaders of New York State need to stop passing the buck and take responsibility for the current politics of misplaced policies and work toward policies will restore to all of New York State's citizens the right to vote.

POLITICAL CALENDAR

The General Election is Tuesday **November 7**.

GENERAL ELECTION

Applications must be postmarked not later than **October 13th** and received by a board of

elections not later than **October 18th** to be eligible to vote in the General Election.

You may register at your local board of elections or any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act, on any business day throughout the year but, to be eligible to vote in the November general election, your application must be received no later than **October 13th** except, if you have been honorably discharged from the military or have become a naturalized citizen since **October 13th**, you may register in person at the board of elections up until **October 27th**.

Notices of change of address from registered voters received by **October 18th** by the Chautauqua County Board of Elections in Mayville must be processed and entered in the records in time for the general election.

VOTING BY ABSENTEE BALLOT

FOR GENERAL

Oct. 31 Last day to postmark application or letter of application for absentee ballot.

Nov. 6 Last day to apply in person for absentee ballot.

Nov. 6 Last day to postmark absentee ballot. Must be received by the board of elections no later than Nov. 9th.

Nov. 7 Last day to deliver ballot in person to the board of elections.

There will be 5 new accessible voting machines in Chautauqua County-in Jamestown, Dunkirk, Mayville, Cherry Creek and Sherman. As this is being written, the exact locations have not been announced. These new machines are accessible to people who use wheelchairs and people with visual impairments. We encourage people with disabilities who generally vote by absentee ballot to get to

the accessible voting machines in their area. If you need a ride, call Helen at 661-3010. SILC has an agreement with the NYS Board of Elections to provide free wheelchair accessible transportation to any Jamestown resident with a disability to the accessible site in Jamestown.

According to a published report, the NYS Board of Elections has identified only ten voters in Chautauqua County who are disabled! I know of more than 10 people myself! The Chautauqua County Board of Elections is citing this ridiculous number as proof that accessible machines are not necessary. If you want more accessibility, you have to prove to county officials that there is a need for it! The way to prove it is to physically go to the polling site.

A word of advice to people who use absentee ballots. Absentee ballots are the last ballots counted and are only counted if they are needed to decide a close election.

Please go to your polling place. Call Helen if you need a ride. You can shoot 2 birds with one stone. Cast your ballot and make your physical presence known to election officials!

REGISTRATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE HERE OR ON LINE AT <http://www.elections.state.ny.us/download/voting/voteform.pdf> (English) or <http://www.elections.state.ny.us/download/voting/spanishvoteform.pdf> (Spanish)
We can send you a registration form, just call Helen at 661-3010.

**CHAIR TOPPER FOR CAR.
GOOD CONDITION.
PREVIOUS OWNER
WISHES TO DONATE IT
TO SOMEONE
WHO CAN USE IT.
FOR INFORMATION
PLEASE CALL HELEN
AT 661-3010**

ACCESS = OPPORTUNITIES

The Better Business Bureau has put out a series of brochures Access Equals Opportunities-dealing with the Americans with Disabilities Act in various commercial establishments Each brochure contains a question and answer section.

.The Americans with Disabilities Act require that physical alterations to public accommodations undertaken after January 26, 1992 be readily accessible

RETAIL STORES

Q. Are retail stores required to have TDDs (Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf)
A. No, For making calls to or receiving calls from customers with hearing or speech impairments who used TDDs, stores can relay on the New York State relay systems. Operators employed by relay systems will relay communications between TDD-users and people using conventional telephones. Only those businesses that allow customers to make outgoing calls on more than incidental convenience basis must provide TDDs.

Q. Are retail stores that offer parking required to provide accessible parking spaces?

A. Yes, If a retail store owns and operates a parking lot, it must provide accessible parking if it is readily achievable to do so. If the retail store is a tenant, responsibility for providing accessible parking rests with both the tenant and the landlord. These responsibilities may be allotted between the landlord and tenant in the lease or other contract.

Q. Are retail stores required to remove barriers posed by sidewalk curbs?

A. If the only parking available is on a city street and the business does not have ownership control of the side walk, then the municipality, not the store, is responsible for providing curb ramps (cuts). If the store owns or controls the sidewalk, it must provide curb cuts if readily achievable. If the retail store is a tenant, responsibility for providing curb cuts rests with both the tenant and the landlord. These responsibilities may be allotted between the landlord and tenant in the lease or other contract.

Q. Must all entrances to retail stores be accessible?

A. No, but one entrance, preferably the main entrance must be accessible. For most businesses, ramping one step or even several steps will be readily achievable.

Q. Can a retail store deny service to a person with a disability because his or her disability or behavior resulting from the disability may be disturbing to other customers?

A. No, The ADA specifically prohibits this type of discrimination against people with disabilities.

Q. How do retail stores make their merchandise accessible to customers with various disabilities?

A. Customers who use wheelchairs, crutches, or other mobility devices, customers with limited manual dexterity, and customers who are blind or who have limited vision tend to experience certain types of access problems in retail establishments. For example, people who use wheelchairs are sometimes unable to move down aisles when stock or displays are placed in them.

Although widening aisles where merchandise is displayed is an ideal solution for customers who use wheelchairs, in many retail establishments it will result in a significant loss of selling space and is, therefore, in those cases not readily achievable for those stores.

Some retail stores, such as department stores, may be able to rearrange display racks and shelves in a way that does not result in a significant loss of selling space.

Placing lightweight items on higher selves and heavier items on lower shelves and offering the use of a device for reaching high items will improve the usability of a store not only for customers with mobility impairments but also for customers with manual impairments. Otherwise, sales clerks should offer assistance in reaching items.

Moving boxes and displays that impede access to aisles or could trip a customer with a vision impairment is a simple, common sense solution to certain access problems that also makes it easier for customers who do not have disabilities.

For retail businesses housed in cramped facilities, there may be no storage alternatives for boxes placed in the aisles. If readily achievable, the store must provide service at the door to customers unable to move down the aisles.

Q. Do dressing rooms need to be accessible?

A. If it is readily achievable, stores must alter one or more dressing rooms to allow use by customers who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. If it is not readily achievable to provide an accessible dressing room, alternative methods must be

used, such as establishing a liberal return policy so customers who cannot use the dressing rooms can take merchandise home to try on.

Q. Are clothing stores required to provide assistance in dressing rooms to people with disabilities?

A. The Dept. of Justice states that dressing assistance is required in stores where individualized assistance in selecting and trying on garments is provided. In a store where such assistance is not offered generally, it is not required because it is not provided to other customers.

Q. If a store is staffed with a single cashier, is the cashier required to leave the cash register to assist a customer with a disability?

A. No. The ADA does not require a cashier to leave the register, if so doing poses a security risk.

Q. How can a retail establishment communicate with a customer who is deaf or hard of hearing or who has a speech impairment?

A. Most customers who are deaf or hard of hearing will identify themselves by writing a note or using hand gestures. When a salesperson has determined that a customer is deaf or hard of hearing, he or she can communicate by writing notes. Maintaining face-to-face contact is important for communications with a customer who reads lips.

The services of a sign language interpreter should not be necessary to accomplish most retail transactions that are short and straightforward with deaf individuals, but may be necessary to communicate effectively in an unusually complex transaction.

Stores that use public address systems to announce special offers or sale days should consider providing electronic bulletin boards or print announcements near doors and check-out counters to announce these events as a way to communicate effectively with

customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, if they can do so without incurring significant difficulty or expense.

It is also important for retail businesses to communicate effectively with customers who have speech impairments. Allowing sufficient time for a person with such a disability to express him or herself or read a message spelled out on a word board are examples of methods to achieve effective communication.

If you are interested in the entire brochure, please call Chris at 661-3013 for information.

**TRANSPORTATION FOR
PEOPLE WITH
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

Through a grant from the Western New York Developmental Disabilities Services Office, Southwestern Independent Living Center provides FREE evening and weekend wheelchair accessible transportation to Chautauqua County residents with developmental disabilities who are living with family members. This service is not exclusively for people living with parents. Riders can live with their parents, spouse or their own children. Riders can use this transportation service throughout the county for recreational purposes. Riders must provide documented proof of disability.

For more information, call Helen at 661-3010.

**WALGREENS RECRUITS
EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES
THROUGH NEW, HIGHLY
ACCESSIBLE WEB SITE**

DEERFIELD, Ill., July 7, 2006 -- Walgreens, the nation's largest drugstore chain, has launched an innovative initiative to hire people with disabilities at its new distribution center in Anderson, S.C. and is recruiting through a new, specially-designed Web site.

Walgreensoutreach.com describes jobs available at the Walgreens distribution center and is designed to be accessible by people with sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities.

The center has begun pre-hire training and will open in 2007. Initially, Walgreens will hire more than 200 employees with plans to ramp up to more than 600 employees. Walgreens goal is to have at least one-third of the workforce consist of employees with a variety of disabilities working in a fully-integrated team. This "real work for real pay" environment will be competitive employment in which performance standards must be maintained. Job openings at the Anderson distribution center include a number of management positions.

Walgreensoutreach.com provides information to help potential employees understand what work will be like at the distribution center. The site incorporates audio messages, photos, video and a large-print text option to depict jobs and work life at Anderson. The site also is designed to be accessible to blind and low vision individuals who use screen reader technology. Under the jobs section, videos show employees performing various jobs, and the text describes what the workers are doing. Prospective employees unsure if they can perform the essential job functions can take a self-quiz to get an idea of the tasks

involved.

From the same page, a series of photos shows an employee arriving at work and going through the daily routine – going to a locker, storing lunch, walking to a work station, taking a break and ending the day.

For potential employees considering relocating to Anderson, the site also has information about Walgreens partnership with 13 local disability agencies. Knowing the difficult challenges faced by people with disabilities who want to work, Walgreens designed the Web site to address concerns such as transportation, housing and the impact of gainful employment on Medicaid, SSI or SSDI benefits.

"We know this requires more than a 'build it and they will come' attitude to be successful," said Randy Lewis, Walgreens senior vice president of distribution and logistics. Lewis, who has a son with autism, knows first-hand the challenges of everyday life for people with disabilities. "Our local partners and statewide officials have worked tirelessly in setting up a support network to make this outreach with the disability community a success," said Lewis.

Larry Kraemer, human resources manager for the Anderson distribution center, said, "This is a workforce that is underemployed and has not had the same opportunities as others. This is a chance to change that."

Walgreensoutreach.com also features success stories. One is that of Chuck Studzienko, an employee with Asperger's Syndrome (a form of autism) who has worked at Walgreen's Lehigh Valley distribution center since 2004. He started as a stocker and was promoted to split-case picker, where he has had a 100 percent productivity rate.

**JAMESTOWN YMCA ADAPTIVE
AQUATICS PROGRAM**

Walgreens worked with The Paciello Group (TPG) of Nashua, N.H., to make Walgreensoutreach.com accessible for people with various disabilities and to meet the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

The Paciello Group was founded by Mike Paciello with a mission to make information technology resources available to the full spectrum of people with disabilities. Paciello has pioneered the field of accessible interface design as a technologist, consultant, author and professional speaker. His internationally best-selling book, "Web Accessibility for People With Disabilities," remains the definitive reference for accessibility design, implementation and usability.

"The impact of this new Walgreens Web site is immeasurable," said Paciello. "It will be embraced by the disability community as a critical tool in the employment process. TPG is proud to be a part of this forward-thinking Walgreens initiative."

Walgreen Co. is the nation's largest drugstore chain with fiscal 2005 sales of \$42.2 billion. The company operates 5,294 stores in 46 states and Puerto Rico. Walgreens also provides additional services to pharmacy patients and prescription drug and medical plans through Walgreens Health Services, its managed care division, which includes Walgreens Health Initiatives Inc. (a pharmacy benefits manager), Walgreens Mail Service Inc., Walgreens Home Care Inc. and Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy. More information on Walgreens is available at Walgreens.com or Walgreensespanol.com.

The Jamestown YMCA has recently installed a hydraulic lift chair in its upper pool. They plan to offer an adaptive swimming program which would include swim lessons, water exercise, group activities, and/or recreational swim.

The YM has 2 pools; the upper pool with a temperature of 82° and chair lift and the lower pool with 86° water and no lift. Each pool has a stairway with handles. The facility has an elevator for access to locker rooms. The lower pool requires a 3 step staircase entry while the upper pool is accessible through the 4th Street Housing entrance. A hot tub is available for use.

The program is available to people with disabilities Monday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 PM. The cost is \$2.00 per visit. There is no charge for people who assist the swimmer but staff/ assistant(s) are required to be in the water for individuals who require any type of assistance. Participants must complete a registration form.

For more information, call Jason Chinni 664-2802 ext. 233.

**BUSH'S MENTAL ILLNESS
SCREENING SQUAD ON THE
MOVE**

Evelyn Pringle of OpEdNews. com

The tax dollar funded mental health screening programs popping up in every corner of the nation represent an enormous gift to Big Pharma from the Bush administration. After all, drug companies can't push drugs without a lucrative

customer base, so the screening programs are a great solution for that little problem.

On April 29, 2002, President Bush kicked off the whole mental health screening scheme when he announced the establishment of the New Freedom Commission (NFC) during a speech in New Mexico where he told the audience that mental health centers and hospitals, homeless shelters, and the justice and school systems, have contact with individuals suffering from mental disorders but that too many Americans are falling through the cracks, and so he created the NFC to ensure that the cracks are closed.

A little over a year after Bush announced the formation of the NFC, on July 22, 2003, government report was released that called for redesigning the mental health systems in all 50 states. A press release previewing the report stated:

"Achieving this goal will require greater engagement and education of first line health care providers-primary care practitioners-and a greater focus on mental health care in institutions such as schools, child welfare programs, and the criminal and juvenile justice systems. The goal is integrated care that can screen, identify, and respond to problems early".

About 7 months later, on February 5, 2003, a subcommittee report was released titled, "Promoting, Preserving and Restoring Children's Mental Health," and stated in part: "The extent, severity, and far-reaching consequences of mental health problems in children and adolescents make it imperative that our nation adopt a comprehensive, systematic, public health approach to improving the mental health status of children." The NFC's final report calls for screening every child in America, including preschoolers, and points out that, "schools are in a key position to identify mental health problems early and to provide a link to appropriate services."

In addition, according to the final report, every child plugged into a government program, will automatically be screened in accordance with the following recommendation: "Screening should be implemented upon entry into, and periodically thereafter in, the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, as well as in other settings and populations with known high risk, such as the Medicaid population." "When mental health problems are identified," the report says, "youth should be linked with appropriate services and supports."

Critics say "appropriate services and supports" means doctor's prescribing drugs. According to the results of a 2002 survey of recently trained child psychiatrists, in the Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, nine out of 10 pediatric patients under their care were treated with prescription drugs. The NFC specifically calls for all screening programs to be linked to "state-of-the-art treatments" using "specific medications for specific conditions."

Read more of this opinion piece at http://www.opednews.com/articles/genera_elyyn_p_060711_lawsuits___only_weap.htm or check the archives section of OpEdNews.com. If you do not have access to the internet, contact Chris at 661-3013 and I'll send you the entire 9 page article. It not only deals with children but all segments of the population.

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TRANSITION NEWS



The T.R.E. Center is the New York State Education Department's (VESID, Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities) Designated Assistive Technology and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Resource and Training Center for Parents, Educators, Therapists, Agencies and Anyone with Disabilities.

The T.R.E. Center serves many purposes both for New York State and locally to school districts in the Capital Region Area. Its main focus in their trainings and other support services is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) initiative and Assistive Technology (AT). We want to provide the educators, administrators, therapists, and classroom support staff and SETRC trainers of New York with the best support available to perform their jobs of educating our children equally under UDL and train the trainers of the SETRC network to also support educators under the UDL umbrella.

The T.R.E. Center receives funding from VESID(Grant), NYS DDPC(Grant), and bills School Districts to perform various services that aren't provided by the two grants. The T.R.E. Center is also supported by The Capital Region BOCES, a non-profit organization with administrative and support personnel and office space.

Most of their services are aimed at training staff and trainers so educators, therapists and support staff receive much of their service. Students and parents also benefit from their services directly at times. The ages of students the Center serves is school age (K-12) but staff also provide free information for anyone of any age in New York State.

The T.R.E. Center specializes in Assistive Technology and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). To this end they have created two websites to reflect these two purposes, TRECENTER.org and UDLinNYS.org.

The T.R.E. Center provides publications on Assistive Technology for students, IDEA; information on locating Assistive Technology; and professional development

Contact them for more information or sign up for their newsletter e-mailing list.

Phone: Toll Free in NYS: **1 - 800 - 248 - 9873**, From anywhere: **(518) 464 - 6346**

Fax: (518) **464 - 6353**, 24 hours, 7 days a week - If Busy, try 2nd # @ (518) 464 - 6388

Mail: TRE Center - Maywood School, 1979 Central Ave. Albany, NY 12205

Internet: <http://TREcenter.org> (or www.trecenter.org)



SILC will be closed October 10 for Columbus Day

TO GET MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to receive more information about the services we provide, please fill in the information below, check the appropriate box/ boxes and return it to Southwestern Independent Living Center, Inc., 843 North Main Street, Jamestown, NY 14701. Or you may call us at (716-661-3010); or 661-3012 (TDD). E-mail- info@ilc-jamestown.ny.org; web site- <http://www.ilc-jamestown-ny.org>

Name: _____

Address: _____



Phone: _____

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Peer Support | Individual and Group sessions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Advocacy | Assistance with legal and economic rights. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Housing | Assistance in locating adequate, affordable and accessible housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation | Wheelchair Accessible van available for medical and social Appointments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Information and Referral | Information about other area services and organizations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TDD Relay Calls | For hearing impaired individuals with <u>T</u> elecommunication <u>D</u> evice for the <u>D</u> eaf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Education | Regarding issues pertaining to people with disabilities. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Newsletter | A bi-monthly publication of SILC. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | SILC Membership | A one year membership is \$5. |

NYS TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE LIBRARY

The New York State Talking Book and Braille Library is a unit of the New York State Library, which is part of the New York State Office of Cultural Education. All of these entities come under the direction of the New York State Education Department.

Founded in 1896, the New York State Talking Book and Braille Library is the third oldest regional library for the blind in the United States. It is located in the Cultural Education Center in Albany, New York. The Library handles all of the Upstate New York readers who use Braille or talking books. Down state readers (NYC, Nassau, and Suffolk) use the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library, which operates under the auspices of the New York Public Library. There is no organizational connection between the two libraries.

In order to use the services of the Talking Book and Braille Library, A person must be blind or legally blind, physically disabled to the degree that they cannot hold a book or turn the pages of a book, or reading disabled owing to a physical disability. A temporary disability also qualifies a person to use the Library's services. The Library has 68,000 titles and 780,000 copies of those titles. It currently has about 600,000 volumes on its shelves, with the remaining volumes currently on loan to readers. The Library boasts one of the largest - if not the largest - Braille collections in the world. About half a million books are mailed each year to some 39,000 readers. In addition, the Library has 20 machine sub-lending agencies which are under contract with the Education Department to lend cassette players to readers. The Library currently owns 48,000

cassette players, most of which are currently loaned out. Every person who signs up for the Library's services received a new cassette player.

The largest component of The Talking Book and Braille Library is its mail-order operation. Because over ninety-nine percent of the Library's readers receive their books by mail, the Library Staff realized that they needed an automated system to handle the large volume of incoming and outgoing cassettes. The resulting product is an impressive processing system designed in part by Rensselaer Polytechnic Center for Advanced Technology. It is a 135 foot long computerized mechanical processing line which opens the cassette container, removes the old shipping label, checks the database to see if there is a current request for the book, then it either re-labels the carton and sends it to the next reader, or sends it back into a queue. The Library processes about 4,000 books per day.

In addition to the automated tasks, the library also fills between 300 and 800 "emergency" requests each day. These orders are filled manually and shipped to readers who need expedited service.

Changing Technologies for a Changing Readership

There has been a steady evolution of assistive reading technologies over the last hundred years: Braille, phonograph records, flexible records, cassettes, web Braille and now flash card books. But time marches on. In April 2007 the cassette players that are currently shipped to the Library's readers will no longer be produced...Enter the flash card book.

"The flash card book is coming in 2008", says Somers, library director. It's about the size of a credit card and is inserted into a special player. The flash card book is the result of a 20 year international effort. The

standards for it are global so that any library in the world will be able to use it. Somers says that "the switch to flash card books will be slow because it's very demanding, but we're ready and able to take that on." She doesn't yet know how many of the current books on cassette will be transferred to flash card books.

Today's kids will use much different technology than their parents to read talking books. And there are a lot of kids out there reading talking books. Somers says that 15,600 children are currently registered with the Talking Book and Braille Library, and that the Library has a very active school program in Upstate New York, with about 1800 schools currently registered. "The kids will come on fast with the online books...they'll probably be able to be able to use their MP3 Players with the online books."

For more information about the New York State Talking Book and Braille Library, please visit them online at: www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl or email: tbbl@mail.nysed.gov (adult services) or tbblkids@mail.nysed.gov (youth services). You may also call 800-342-3688.

Information from the June 2006 issue of the E-bulletin, on-line newsletter of the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The entire issue can be found at <http://www.ebulletin.us/pages/home.htm>



**CAPTIONED TELEPHONE
SERVICE IN NEW YORK FOR
HEARING IMPAIRED
CUSTOMERS
THREE HUNDRED PHONES
TO BE INSTALLED MONTHLY**

The New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) announced that beginning January 2007, PSC will provide Captioned Telephone relay service for the two million people in New York State who cannot understand conversation on the phone. This announcement marks a grassroots victory for people with hearing loss as January 2007 is a time that New York residents have been waiting for.

The Hearing Loss Association of New York State (HLAA), led by member David Branfield, has advocated for this service for the past 18 months. HLAA-NY held several meetings with the New York PSC staff that culminated in a public comment period during which more than 100 citizens wrote to PSC telling why captioned telephone was so important to them in their everyday lives, especially in the workplace.

The decision by the New York PSC is cause for celebration and is indeed a victory for the grassroots members of Hearing Loss Association of New York who advocated strongly for their right to be able to use the phone like everyone else.

David Branfield, chair of the Captioned Telephone Advocacy Committee, New York State Association of the Hearing Loss Association of America commented: "People with hearing loss should have options available to them that will enable them to understand and comprehend the spoken words via the phone. Captioned Telephone

eliminates much of the time delay associated with the traditional Telecommunication Relay Services. Having a Captioned Telephone at work will allow an employee who can speak and has a hearing loss to perform phone tasks independently, and with mental and physical ease. Allowing Captioned Telephone Service in New York State is a win-win situation for everyone.”

Captioned Telephone is similar to captioned television: spoken words appear as written text for viewers to read. Captioned Telephone provides the closest thing to real-time captioning for the phone where words appear on a built-in screen on the phone so users can read the words while listening to the voice of the other party. Captioned Telephone users place a call in the same way as dialing on a traditional phone. As they dial, the Captioned Telephone automatically connects to a captioning service. When the other party answers, the Captioned Telephone user hears everything they say, just like a traditional call.

New York joins 38 other states to offer Captioned Telephone and is leading the pack with the number of users they allow to join the service each month, which is planned to be 300. Captioned Telephone now is limited and rationed by the states due to cost. The Hearing Loss Association of America is petitioning for a nationwide mandate from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

There are currently 31 million Americans with hearing loss and that number is projected to rise to 40 million within one generation. The Hearing Loss Association of America strongly supports ways people with hearing loss can use the phone on their jobs, to reach emergency services, to conduct everyday business, and stay in touch with family and friends.

In October 2005, HLAA, together with 35 other professional and consumer organizations representing people with hearing loss, submitted a petition to the FCC requesting that Captioned Telephone be mandated as a telecommunications relay service.

Brenda Battat, HLAA associate executive director for public policy, said: “Captioned Telephone allows people who have some hearing loss and can speak to use the phone in a manner that is most natural for them. Due to state limits on the use of Captioned Telephone it is the only form of relay service that is not equally available to all Americans who want to use it. This goes against the Americans with Disabilities Act requirement that relay services be functionally equivalent to the regular phone service and we are determined to change it.

Information supplied by Patti Morlock
NYS Commission on Quality of Care and
Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

**PLEASE CONTINUE
SAVING CAMPBELLS
PRODUCTS LABELS.
WE REALLY
APPRECIATE THE
HELP**