

A Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Impact on Voting Rights

Event Transcript from July 27, 2020

Panelists:

Christopher Wood:

Katy Schmidt:

Danita Jackson:

Moderators:

Barbara Beckert:

Shauntay Nelson:

Shauntay Nelson: Can everyone hear me? Alright. This is Shauntay, thank you all for being a part of this and welcome to the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is a Facebook live with All Voting is Local as well as the Wisconsin Disability Coalition is co-hosting. And we have a phenomenal group of panelists whom will have this conversation with us around the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the impact on voting rights, here specifically in the state of Wisconsin. This particular event will have captioning as well as an ASL interpreter. We are asking, if you have questions, if you are tuning in with us live via Facebook, put your questions there in the chat on Facebook as well as if you are tuning in with us via zoom, you can put your questions right here in the chat box. We are going to jump right in. I am going to share who our panelists are as well as our co-host and then I will give everyone the opportunity to introduce themselves. One other word of...I don't know, caution? Maybe I should say? Is if we can, before we speak, introduce ourselves and state our name so that those who may not be able to hear what we have to say, those who are deaf, those will be able to follow what we are saying on the screen. So this is Shauntay Nelson, I have with me Barbara Beckert who is from the Disability Rights Coalition as well as Disability Rights Wisconsin. And then we have three phenomenal panelists: We have Danita Jackson who is the intake specialist with Disability Rights Wisconsin, we have Katy Schmidt who is the past president of the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf, and we have Chris Wood who is a board member with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. So I am going to allow Barbara to share a word or two about why this is important for her.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you, Shauntay for the warm welcome. Disability Rights Wisconsin and the Disability Vote Coalition are so happy to partner with All Voting is Local and with our tremendous panelists to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It's such a meaningful aspect of the civil rights movement for people with disabilities. Voting's one our nation's most fundamental rights and a hallmark of our democracy, but for too long many people with disabilities were excluded from this important constitutional right. We've made some significant progress, and it's important to celebrate that. But I think you'll hear today from our panel members that we still need to roll up our sleeves and get to work because barriers remain. So I'll turn it back to Shauntay to begin the discussion today with our first question. I'm looking forward to hearing from and learning from these three tremendous advocates.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you, Barbara. This is Shauntay again. We will just go in this order - so once person ends, the next can chime in. So in this particular order for this question, I will ask first the answer from Danita, and then Katy, and then Chris. And the question I'd love to present to you all is: Why is it important to you as an individual to vote?

Danita Jackson: Hello my name is Danita, and I feel it's important as an individual, as a woman, as an African American, and as someone who is blind, to vote, because we have our voices heard. That is the best way we can individually make change - it can start out local, go systemically, and hopefully nationally. I feel it's important that we say what we want and a great way to do it is to vote.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you. This is Shauntay again. Katy?

Katy Schmidt: Hello, I'm Katy. Voting is very important to me as an individual, because as an individual, I want my future to be wonderful. Meaning the elected officials need to work for us because we actually pay our taxes to support them. So we need to choose and select the right people so that the disability community in general can be supported. Including the deaf community, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, which happens to be the community I'm part of. So that's why voting is important. Even though our community is quite small, we still have a loud voice.

Christopher Wood: Hello, I'm Chris. The reason I think voting is important is because like the other panelists have said, it's the only way to speak with one collective voice to create change. And also, if voting wasn't important, they wouldn't be trying to suppress the vote, particularly in African American and underprivileged communities. So even when it's more difficult for individuals with disabilities to vote, it's really important that we all band together so we can create social change.

Shauntay Nelson: This is Shauntay. Thank you all, I really do agree with all our panelists have conveyed. It is so important. We often have this whole thing about,

"Your vote is your voice." And it really is our voice when it comes to democracy. And so, Barbara, I will share this space with you so if you have questions you can chime in as well.

Barbara Beckert: Alright, thank you, Shauntay. Our next question which I'm gonna ask in just a minute is going to talk about why the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, is important to each of our panelists. But I just wanted to share a few comments about the ADA first. As an advocate for voting rights, it's so important to know about the different laws that are fundamental to supporting our right to vote. And there are a number of them that are fundamental to supporting people with disabilities. Some of the areas that the ADA addresses include ensuring that state and local governments make sure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. In addition to that, there's a requirement that they provide accessible voting systems. For example, each polling place is required to have an accessible voting machine here individuals with disabilities can vote privately and independently. The ADA requires that those are properly maintained - that they're not just sitting in your polling place, but that they're turned on and that they're working correctly. The ADA also requires that people with disabilities can access and use their voting facilities, so that accessibility is very important. So I'm really interested in hearing from all of you why the ADA is important to you, and what aspect of voting rights it particularly addresses that's important to you and others who you advocate with and for. Let's start with Katy this time.

Katy Schmidt: The ADA is important because it provides for equal access for everyone. But that's only in theory. In theory, it's supposed to provide equal access. But we still have a lot of work to do to address that issue - the issue of equal access and opportunity. It's there in writing, and it's very clear - so for example here we have an interpreter here for us, and that's one example of access that provides for participation in this type of community event, whereas before there was no provision for that. We used to have to use volunteer interpreters or people who were interpreting who did not get paid for their work. So we have to pay now for communication access, and we have to pay for that in order for it to work for us to have equal access to employment opportunities, enhanced life experience for people in the deaf community - for example if you want to go to dog training, an interpreter should be there. This type of everyday activity. If you want to attend the theater, we have to have access. So that's one of the wonderful provisions of the ADA. Without which, we wouldn't have equal access and equal opportunity.

Barbara Beckert: Katy thanks for your advocacy. Let's go to Chris now. Chris same question.

Christopher Wood: Okay. I first learned about how important the ADA was with regard to voting the first time I went into a voting booth in 2006. They're supposed to have an accessible voting machine, but the accessible voting machine they had was

rickety and didn't work properly. So they got a little bit of a nice earful from me because it's kind of embarrassing when you're 18 and you have to have your parents go in there and cast a ballot for you. And besides that, the able-bodied voting booths aren't exactly big enough to fit an electric wheelchair in there along with another person. So it was a very interesting experience, but luckily for me it only took one time. My city here in Eau Claire was very receptive to the change. I mean they had to be, but they were receptive. They even had poll workers go in there for a two day training on how to run it properly so it didn't screw up again the next election and it's been working fine ever since and the poll workers look for me so they've got 3 or 4 people ready to man the machine now.

Barbara Beckert: Chris, thank you so much for sharing that experience. And I think it's a great reminder to all of us how the voice of one advocate can really make a difference and you made a difference in your community and maybe others will follow your example.

Christopher Wood: Oh it's a lot of fun. It's very empowering. But it takes, you have to really be persistent. I must have had to call 2 or 3 times to make sure they were working on it.

Barbara Beckert: Excellent. Well your persistence it paid off it sounds like. Great work. Danita, we'd love to hear from you. Can you talk a little bit about why the ADA is important to you as a voter.

Danita Jackson: This is Danita speaking. I feel the ADA is important to me when it comes to voting because it allowed for the accessible voting machines where they actually read off the ballots for me and I can answer them and it's all speaking to me. Before then I've had to vote using assistance from people, and sometimes I didn't vote because I didn't just want a total stranger marking my ballot for me. And so it's really important - you know, it's important when you say the ADA and you have something to back you up, and recourse in case something doesn't happen. I used an accessible machine in the last primary. And it was there, but there were no headphones. So I couldn't hear what was on the screen so I did follow protocol and talk to the chief, but it was an interesting experience. I've had a couple experiences, one good, and that wasn't so great. And I ended up having to use someone. Thankfully my niece was with me. It's important to have the laws in writing that we can refer to and point to so we're not just coming something out of the sky saying it's our right, but without anything stating this truly is our right. So I appreciate the door it opened for me in regards to voting independently.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you for those eloquent comments, Danita. That's a really compelling example of why the ADA is so important and why continued advocacy is still needed. I'll turn it over to Shauntay now this is Barbara.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you this is Shauntay Nelson. I just wanted to again to take a moment to thank everyone joining via both zoom as well as Facebook live as well as remind everyone that we do have closed captioning, you simply need to turn that on at the bottom of your screen. In addition to that, we do have an ASL interpreter who is interpreting as we talk. If you have questions or comments and are joining us via Facebook live, please put your questions right there in the Facebook live video if you are joining us via zoom, please feel free to put your comments or questions in the chat. I'll say this as well: if you're joining us via Facebook live, I do want to share that the captions are delayed, so if you find that is not beneficial, we can, I think Peter is monitoring the Facebook live and will put the link in via live, so if you want to chime in via zoom you can do that as well. And then I'll go into our next question. This is Shauntay. The thing I think about is there are a lot of challenges to voting, specifically in Wisconsin, but as it relates to those whom have disabilities. And we know there have been challenges over the last 30 years. And I want to take a moment, because this is a celebration of the 30 years, I want to take a moment to highlight some improvements. What are some voting rights progresses, how have we progressed in voting rights, in your opinion, over this time frame. Are there things you can look at now and celebrate? And I'll start with Chris and then we'll go to Danita and then to Katy. What are some examples of progress in voting rights as we celebrate this 30th anniversary?

Christopher Wood: Well, as I alluded to a moment or two ago: The quality of the accessible voting machines working properly has gotten a lot better. They really, technological advancements, I can stick my own ballots in there, I can manage the screen okay, it's just been...just in the past 10 years there's been more awareness. Not only...it goes to my theory that if we focus on universal design with disabilities in mind, it benefits so many other people. I remember an elderly person coming up to me the last time I voted telling me, "it's nice to have these things here." She's 87 years old and couldn't hardly see a ballot. So she put the headphones on and it was able to read it for her. So these changes that we've made in accessible voting don't just benefit folks with disabilities but anybody that may need them

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you, Chris. Danita...if you want to chime in? This is Shauntay.

Danita Jackson: Well I'm gonna get on those accessible voting machines again. It's been wonderful to use them, and I think it's important because it's there, other people are watching and they're seeing the changes the ADA has had on voting and how independent and someone who has a disability can be with another aspect of their life which is exercising their right to vote. So, while I'm sitting there I got everyone's attention, but it works well. And it's sort of like a promo. It's an advocacy tool itself just to be able to go in there and use it. We can do things, we're not helpless, and we have a voice. And I think that will stick with people. So that's the biggest thing. I just like the fact that it's showing people we are independent and we do have a voice.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you. I appreciate that. Katy?

Katy Schmidt: Yes. Voting in the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind community will always be a challenge. It will always continue to be a challenge, it still is. There's one voting requirement in particular that's written into the law which says that you must verbally state your name and address. And that is still a challenge. So even though there was a new law that passed last year, AB168, AB168 says that if I am a person, just for myself, I can designate somebody else to speak for me, if I am a deaf person. So the deaf community can do that, but we're not comfortable with that. It's a little bit of progress, but it's a small step. We do need to establish a better system for that because we still feel the sense of disempowerment because we need to designate someone to speak on our behalf. But we're still preserving our voting rights so that is the positive aspect of that, at least our right to vote wasn't taken away. And also, another part or progress through ADA and through more media attention and captioning and use of deaf people in the role of advocate and so forth, is that when we do enter the polling place, the poll worker knows we are deaf and knows something about how to be culturally sensitive and I've experience them more willing to be flexible, and they're more personable than before in terms of treating me as a person. So I think that's because of the media exposure, that people have become more aware and comfortable. So I think that's one of the positives that's come out of this.

Shauntay Nelson: This is Shauntay Nelson again. That is a really good point, Katy that you bring out. Just the whole, I don't wanna call it a revelation because it's not necessarily for all of us a revelation, but for some of us it might be, that whole component of not being able to use your own voice to state your name and address, and how it disempowers you from being able to speak on your behalf. As well as, I know we look at some of the ways things have progressed, and all three of you brought up very real ways of progression, and though we know there's so much more work there is to do, we would like to celebrate the work all of us have done to even move the need a bit. Because it is very challenging when you're dealing in this particular space, right? So thank you all for the work you do, let's start there. And then thank all of you who are listening and tuning in regarding the work you do concerning this as well. I want to give space for additional questions, but I did see an additional question in the chat box. And the question is, "In light of the COVID 19 pandemic, many organizations are encouraging people to vote absentee this election system. Is this message getting out to individuals with disabilities, and if so, how?" And I will give that to Barbara.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you so much Shauntay. This is a great question. This is Barbara Beckert with Disability Rights Wisconsin and the Disability Vote Coalition. Voters with Disabilities do tend to vote absentee at a higher rate in regular times, and during the pandemic, because so many people with disabilities are at higher risk of COVID 19, there's really a public health imperative to vote absentee. So the Disability Vote Coalition has created a new fact sheet about absentee voting, it's on our website at disabilityvote.org, because a lot of people with disabilities may not be able to go out

and attend outreach events, or voter registration events, as they would have in the past, we're doing more through other strategies. For example, we're doing training for providers. Personal care providers, managed care organizations and others. We trained 500 providers in the month of July. They're working directly with people with disabilities, and we're encouraging them to work with voters to get that absentee ballot in. It can be a complicated process. A lot of people with disabilities are non drivers, they may not have a drivers license, so having the photo ID that's required for voting can be another challenge. So good question.

Shauntay Nelson: Barbara, you can go ahead. I think you may have another question as well, I'm sorry.

Barbara Beckert: Alright, great. I will move in...

Danita Jackson: Can I chime in on that?

Barbara Beckert: Yes, Danita, please do.

Danita Jackson: So they are requiring absentee ballots, but a person like me who is blind cannot use those ballots independently. So I'm making the choice to go ahead and go in, masked up or gloved up or whatever we have to do, to use that machine because I have to get someone to help me to fill it out, mail it, and it's not accessible for people who are visually impaired. So I'm glad the Wisconsin Council of the Blind is working a screen reader accessible ballot, but it's not going to be available yet. So it's a challenge for people who are blind or visually impaired and not able to pull out those absentee ballots. They didn't think that far ahead. So I'll be going to an in-person voting site and getting mine. And just have to hope that things go well, you know.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you so much for raising that point, Danita. And our organization, Disability Rights Wisconsin actually has a pending lawsuit right now trying to require the state to ensure that an accessible absentee ballot will be available for voters with disabilities so that voters like you have the opportunity to cast an absentee ballot privately and independently. So, we'll see what happens. We're hoping that opportunity will be available for you in the November election, but we'll see what happens in the courts. Well that's maybe a good transition for our next question, which is about challenges that remain for people with disabilities. Should we translate to that, Shauntay? That's an area that we really wanted to get your perspective on today. As we've heard, the ADA has led to a lot of progress. One area we didn't touch on is the requirement for accessibility in polling places. DRW actually goes out on election day on behalf of the election commission, and we do audits of polling places to ensure they're accessible, and while there's still room for improvement, there's been a lot of progress in the 30 years since the ADA was passed. Speaking of improvements, we'd like to hear from each of our panelists about the challenges that remain for voters with disabilities. Would you like to kick us off Chris?

Christopher Wood: One thing that I haven't heard anybody raise yet - for non-drivers, it could be a challenge in non-pandemic times if you want to cast a ballot in person, to get transportation to the ballot box. Especially if you're in rural areas. And I think, like you say, the accessibility of polling place, there's been a lot of progress. I'm very lucky because my community is very accommodating and I have people, not only people but community members that are willing to take me to the polls so I'm very lucky.

Barbara Beckert: Great point, Chris. Transportation continues to be a huge concern since so many people with disabilities are non-drivers. People in normal times would like the option to go to their polling place, but may not have the right to do so because of access to transportation being a problem. Thanks for raising that concern. Katy, would you like to address the question about the challenges that continue?

Katy Schmidt: Certainly. I can think of 3 challenges that are still left. Media exposure in terms of candidates who are running for office. It's always a challenge because on the national level, information tends to be more accessible because there's more funding provided to pay interpreters or captioners to create accessibility so in order to get an idea of what they're platforms are, that's pretty much taken care of. But on the local level where budgets tend to be smaller, they may not have the resources or budget to pay interpreters to provide accessibility. Which means I might not be caught up on what their platforms are, what they stand for, and that's an issue because as a voter, how am I supposed to know what to vote for in that case. And the second challenge I see is in terms of ASL. ASL is our first language, and English is a second language for many members of the deaf community. Which means that if we're trying to access material that's writing in English, not many members of the deaf community are going to be able to fully access that. It may create misunderstandings, or just not comprehending. So there's not a lot of material available in our language. To have that available at our polling place would be greater accessibility. And as I just mentioned earlier, the third one, I'm frustrated at the idea of having to have someone speak for me, to speak my name and my address, and I don't want to have someone doing that for me because it's still very disempowering for us. Not just for me, but for many deaf people. Those are just three of the challenges I can see. These are things we need to apply ourselves to, to create more equal access.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you, Katy. Those are great recommendations. Danita, I wanted to circle back to you now. You've already given some great input, but give you another kick at the can here at speaking to the continuing challenges.

Danita Jackson: I think the continuing challenge is for people to go out and access and use these machines if they really need it. Because, I feel like, it counts when we use these machines and exercise our right using the accessible machines. If we don't use them, I'm not gonna say they'll go away, but we need more. So, I know how

easy it is to have someone bring you. If you can bring someone to bring you when you're visually impaired to vote to have you navigate the structures, situations, when you go into a voting place, but try to use the accommodations to make extra time because they need to be used, and if we don't use them...I'm not gonna say we'll lose them, but it'd be nice to have more than one at every place, and if people are not using what is out there, they may not see as much of a need as they should to make them accessible for us.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you so much, Danita. You're really a powerful spokesperson for the accessible voting machines. Maybe there's an opportunity for the disability vote coalition to invite you to help us with that. We've gotta get the message out there and you do it so well. Thank you.

Shauntay Nelson: I was gonna chime in and say I agree with that. I can hear the passion in all three of our panelists as they speak. I know we are talking about challenges, and I just wanted to throw this question out there. In the midst of COVID, what are would you say some of the challenges are. We are in a time now where we are all still in the midst of a pandemic. What do you all consider a challenge during COVID that maybe was or was not a challenge pre COVID. And I'll just start with Danita if that's okay, and then we'll go to Katy and then Chris.

Danita Jackson: Just getting past the worry of getting COVID. For me, it's just like everybody else. To be masked up, and gloved up, and whatever. You're already concerned about the potential of getting it, taking that chance of going in person to do it, and then you have to worry - hopefully the machines will be accessible and working and you'll have all the parts needed to use those machines. So I'm praying everything will be working out okay. I've been fine so far. I've been doing everything I need to do. So I'm just gonna have faith that I can walk in and out COVID free, and exercise my rights at the same time.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you for sharing, Danita. I appreciate that. Katy?

Katy Schmidt: We have a very big barrier with COVID and that is the mask itself. The mask is a barrier to communication no matter how you slice it. Because you can't see through it. So that means we're not able to read lips, and many deaf people do rely on lip reading for communication. So that's...so people tend to use that for their communication at the polling place. So with a mask and limited access to that, it's basically a communication option that's taken away. So that means they are stuck writing back and forth, which requires pen and paper, which is a transmission device for the virus, and that means you have to come closer to the person that you're writing back and forth with, so there's a higher risk of coming in contact with the virus for many deaf people. So deaf person will experience many different types of barriers if they have to go into the polling places during COVID, and those are some of them.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you for sharing those. This is Shauntay Nelson. Chris we're gonna turn it over to you for your answer to this question.

Christopher Wood: Well I suppose the bigger barrier generally for me is that this pandemic has laid barrier the care giving crisis that we have got. I'm lucky because I've had the same care giver for 7 years, but if he's sick I don't have anyone else because my parents have to work. And the people that I did have didn't want to come out when there was lock down. So the barrier there was exposed two fold there. And the barrier with voting for me is the fact that I don't feel very comfortable going to a crowded polling place at the moment, which is too bad because I love to communicate with the poll workers. I find voting to be one of the most powerful type of things, especially at the ballot box. So to do it absentee kind of takes a little bit of the muster off for me. But I will do it. I enjoy it.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you. I appreciate that. I think we have one final question and then we will see if we have any final questions that need to be answered and we can squeeze those in. At the conclusion I will give each panelist the opportunity to say some last words and say some goodbyes before we end our time together.

Barbara Beckert: Thanks, Shauntay. This is Barbara again. Our next question to our panelists is looking forward: 10 years from now when we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the ADA, what do you hope the world will look like for people with disabilities? I think this time we will go in reverse order. Can we start with Chris?

Christopher Wood: What do I hope that the world will look like in ten years? Well I hope that there are more accessible doors on buildings. I really do. I think that that is one of the biggest barriers yet because I don't care how positive your attitude is, it's not gonna help open a door. And having to ask that every time you need to go in some place that doesn't have a handicap accessible door gets a little bit tiring after awhile. So I hope we can have more accessible doors, and I hope we can make recreational activities more accessible. We're working well on that - beaches and lakes and rivers. They're just putting in an accessible pier in our local communities so we can do some fishing. But I hope we have more recreational opportunities available in 10 years.

Barbara Beckert: I love your vision. Thank you, Chris. Danita would you like to go next?

Danita Jackson: Yeah. I would like to say, coming from the background of employment, that more people with disabilities are out working and employers are more open to accommodating people with disabilities. We are a valuable part of the workforce. So I would like to see the employment rate go up for to employers becoming more open to hiring people with disabilities. And the ADA does make that possible with accommodations.

Barbara Beckert: Thanks, Danita. That's an excellent recommendation. Katy, give us your perspective.

Katy Schmidt: This is Katy. My perspective, what I'm hoping for in the next 10 years, is that we will see growth in the use of technology. Meaning we will have electronic ballots that we can fill out rather than paper, and speaking ballots for the blind, and signed access so that everyone can have equal access to it. I don't want to have to designate somebody, or a designated place for people with disabilities. I want everything to be accessible for all. Like universal design. So when you go in, you don't feel like there's special treatment happening or you have to go to a special booth. And as Danita pointed out, employment too, in the deaf community...unemployment is on the rise, so hoping to see an increase in employment over the next 10 years for the deaf community and see growth in company's willingness to hire deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind people in their workplace. And similarly, to what Chris mentioned, about recreational opportunities, I would like to see that become more accessible for the deaf community as well, with the expanded use of technology to help us access more recreational opportunities such as movie theaters, then hopeful there'll be more options in movie theaters with open captioning and other things of that nature. And I also hope that the media, everything in the media will be fully captioned, because right now we don't have that. So hopefully accessibility in terms of accessing media will also improve over the next ten years.

Barbara Beckert: Thank you, Katy. I hope we have all of this recorded because I want to back and get all these recommendations and come back in 10 years and see where we are.

Shauntay Nelson: Yes, absolutely. This is absolutely great. Thank you all for sharing such great information. Thank you, Barbara, for cohosting this with me. And I'm sorry this is Shauntay Nelson I did not say that my apologies. I wanted to offer space for anyone who may have a story particular to photo ID or one of the barriers, if you'd like to share that information, just let myself or Barbara know, one of the panelists if you know them, we can absolutely help you capture your story around some of these challenges, as well as some of the things that have beneficial as part of this particular act. I am going to try to find if we have questions, and I know we are pretty much wrapping up and coming to time. If there are questions that we don't get to, if we have a large amount of them, we could absolutely put something together that is a question and answer, and get those answers back out to you all. Barbara, if you could check within our chat whether we have questions, and Peter, I know you are chiming in, but if you will let me know if there are questions...I think he's texting me. While we're doing that...oh you have questions, Barbara?

Barbara Beckert: Yes - there is a great question for the panelists, asking is there anything that we can do to advocate for and with individuals that have disabilities to

our communities when it comes to voting rights? So, an opportunity. Maybe each panelist could give a quick response if they have a suggestion. Can we fit that in, Shauntay?

Shauntay Nelson: We can, and then I see a raised hand, also, amongst the attendees. But yes - if we can be quick.

Barbara Beckert: Danita, do you wanna start us off? Do you have a request for community allies who would like to support increased access for voters with disabilities?

Danita Jackson: Write to our legislators, you know. And I know we've heard this a lot, if you see something say something, but that's really important. If you see something that doesn't look right or ask a question of the chief at the voting location, you'll make them aware that someone is looking and taking note of what's maybe a technical issue that would impact someone with a disability to be able to vote.

Barbara Beckert: Great points. Thank you, Danita. Katy? Any recommendation you'd like to share?

Katy Schmidt: Yes. Basically for allies, work with us to set an example. So if you see a person using inappropriate language, for example in our community we call ourselves deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind, and often we hear people say "hearing impaired" so as allies, it's your job to increase awareness that our community self-identifies as deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind, not hearing impaired. So that very simple act of just conveying the right information and making sure that's out there in the public, that exposure, just being able to expose people to correct information about identity, is just really kept to making some of those connections to different parts of the community. More awareness of cultural sensitivity and so forth. Another thing, is it's also very important for people to realize that sensitivity is important, to be sensitive. Culturally aware. If there's something you don't understand or don't know, then approach the person. Maybe I'm not an expert in the field of blindness or something, but approach a person from that community. So if you want to ask about a culture related to the deaf community, or the blind community, if it's a blind question I'd refer that to Danita. If it's a question about the deaf community I'd refer that to me. I'm not an expert in building access so I might refer that question to someone in that community. So it's important for people to be aware of who has expertise in a particular subject, and approach that person to discuss those issues.

Barbara Beckert: Thanks for always helping us know how to be more respectful and inclusive, Katy. I've learned so much from you and am grateful. Chris, would love to hear your insight.

Christopher Wood: I don't have much to add to what Katy said, the only thing I would add is to understand that your legislators work for you. So if you're advocating

on behalf of disability policy and more and more people call the legislators and tell them it's important, they will put it on their radar. Sometimes disability policy kinda gets sent to the bottom of the heap sometimes. So if you raise awareness with the people in power, that would really make a huge impact on the disability community.

Barbara Beckert: That's great. That aligns so much with Danita's advocacy as well, and the need we have right now for an accessible absentee ballot. So that's certainly one thing community members could do, to share that priority with their elected officials. So thank you all for those wise words. I'll turn it back over to Shauntay.

Shauntay Nelson: Yes, thank you all. This is Shauntay Nelson. Thank you all for sharing that. We don't have any questions on Facebook, we have one question here..."I think in my opinion that showing driver's license is equal as the person verbally stating my name and address to a poll worker. I sure hope the law will change again in the near future." So it's not a question, but a statement. We do have a very stringent photo ID law here in the state of Wisconsin. It is a challenge for every individual, no matter what your ability is, it is a challenge. And so if we can get that law changed, that would be phenomenal, however we are in a position right now where the thing that I think is our best response to that particular law is to educate the public as much as possible no matter what the ability is around our voting laws, until we can make some changes. As we've stated, this is a celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our 30th anniversary. It's been 30 years since this particular law was enacted, and as a result of that, we celebrate that time and we celebrate those small advancements. Like the last question Barbara asked, maybe in 10 years we can celebrate some larger advancements. So if we don't have any additional questions, I'm going to give an opportunity for each of our panelists to share some final words and say our goodbyes. Of course, once I end this it will end the Facebook live as well as our time together and I don't want to do that without allowing us to share final words and say goodbye. So, I guess I should say who's gonna go. So, Ms. Danita. Can I start with you and then go with Christopher and then Katy if that's fine. And then Barbara to round us out.

Danita Jackson: I just want to say, if you can, go out and vote absentee, in person, whatever. Our voice is important.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you. Danita, can you close out by sharing who you're with again as well?

Danita Jackson: I'm with Disability Rights Wisconsin.

Shauntay Nelson: Christopher, you're muted but next.

Christopher Wood: I'm with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. My advice or words of encouragement is to say that everyone has a voice,

whether they think they can or not, they can influence legislators or political leaders just by making their voice heard. Even the smallest voice can have a tremendous impact on public policy.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you, Chris. Katy?

Katy Schmidt: Yes. I wanted to close with your vote does count. Maybe you think you're just one single individual and your vote isn't going to make a difference, but think how many people think that way. And how many people say, "Oh I'm not going to bother voting because I'm just one person." If everybody thought that way, you would have a critical mass of people who could have made or broken that election. Exercise your rights through voting in person or absentee. It's very important. I think this year's election is vital because many of our rights are at stake right now.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you so much. Barbara?

Barbara Beckert: Thank you, Shauntay. And first my heartfelt gratitude to our panelists who've done such a tremendous job today and really I think given us a blueprint for the issues that we need to address moving forward. You know as we celebrate the ADA 30th, Justin Dart is often referred to as the father of the ADA. He's a very well-known disability activist. And one of his best lines is, "Vote as if your life depends on it. Because it does." And I think that's a great reminder of how important and fundamental the vote is. I invite everyone to join with us in this cause, to ensure that people with disabilities have the right to be heard at the ballot box, go to disabilityvote.org, get on our email list, and make common cause with us to close the gap so people with disabilities have the same opportunity as other Wisconsinites to make their voices heard.

Shauntay Nelson: Thank you. Again this is Shauntay Nelson, I am the state director with All Voting is Local. I also want to join my voice and say thank you to each of our panelists. You all have provided a wealth of information and you are such a great resource. I am honored to be in this space with you all. And I say thank you for all you have done. Thank you, Barbara. Thank you our interpreters and individuals whom are helping capture in close captioning, thank you to those of us helping to monitor on Facebook, thank you to everyone whose helped to set this up. I will say that one of the best things that we can do as partners in this work is to continue to first if all be present. Be present with each other, listen to how voting and some of the stringent limitations impact each other, be sensitive in that listening, as well as join the fight with one another. I may not understand the full impact, or someone else may not understand the full impact, but if we can stand together I think we can change the way things are done. And I will say to everyone, if you're not aware, I want to make sure it is known, you can request an absentee ballot, should you choose to vote that way, through August 6th of 2020. Of course the election day coming up is August 11th, and if you decide that you're going to vote in person, we celebrate you in that, we support

you in that, be safe - please wear protective gear, and if you have any problems or any issues on election day or leading up to election day, you can always contact election protection, which is 1-886-OUR VOTE. 1 866 O-U-R V-O-T-E. Again, thank you all for being a part of this panel, and until we meet again, you all have a great rest of your day. Bye bye, everyone!

Barbara Beckert: Thank you everyone and thank you, Shauntay. This was great partnering with you all. Really grateful Danita, Katy, and Chris.

Shauntay Nelson: Alright, I'm ending it you all! Have a great one!