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New Report Warns Democracy Is Under Threat for Disabled Montana Voters

Disability Rights Montana documents state actions and systemic failures that disenfranchise voters with disabilities

HELENA, Mont. — Disability Rights Montana today released a new report warning that democracy itself is under attack for Montanans with disabilities, as elected officials and state systems increasingly undermine their ability to vote freely and independently.

The report, *The Most Powerful Right: Protecting the Right to Vote and Advancing Civic Engagement for Montanans with Disabilities*, draws on Disability Rights Montana's federal authority to monitor facilities and services where people with disabilities live and receive care. The findings reflect what staff have seen and heard firsthand across the state.

"This report is not hypothetical, and it is not academic," said David Carlson, Executive Director of Disability Rights Montana. "There are elected officials in Montana actively working to disenfranchise voters, and there are people paid by the state whose apathy strips other Montanans of their fundamental right to vote. Democracy is not being eroded in theory, it is being undermined in practice."

The report documents barriers to voting in assisted living facilities, adult group homes, and the Montana State Hospital, where disabled Montanans often lack meaningful access to registration, ballots, or voting assistance. The report shares examples of disabled voters being shut out of the electoral process altogether.

In addition to documenting on-the-ground barriers, the report outlines ongoing legal and advocacy battles being waged by Disability Rights Montana in courtrooms

and at the Montana State Capitol to stop state actors from suppressing the disability vote.

"Voting is the most powerful right we have as citizens," Carlson said. "When that right is denied to people with disabilities, whether through hostile policy, neglect, or indifference, the entire democratic system is weakened. We released this report to make those failures impossible to ignore."

The Most Powerful Right concludes with specific recommendations for policymakers, election officials, and service providers, emphasizing that accessible voting is not optional, but a legal and moral obligation.

The full report is available at: <https://disabilityrightsmt.org/voting>

About Disability Rights Montana

Disability Rights Montana is a private, nonprofit organization mandated by Congress to protect the rights of Disabled Montanans as Montana's Protection and Advocacy system. The organization works statewide to protect and advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities through legal advocacy, investigation, monitoring, education, and systems reform.