



## **REV UP! Making the Disability Vote Count Webinar Transcript | July 15, 2020**

Good afternoon and welcome to the second in the three part in advance independent learning. The today's topic will be making the disability vote count. I am Ron Kermani, a recovering reporter. I went to the Darkside in my career and spent years in public relations and advertising be the public relations director of a large public employee union. The public employee Federation. I went to the New York State trial lawyer as the PR director. Then I went to the very Darkside and worked for the higher education services Corporation. It is my pleasure to be with you today. And the statewide system advocacy nature as you know it as as and was created to have the independent living in the development of local partnerships and coalitions. Engaging community issues impacting able with disabilities.

The overall goal is to increase knowledge and visibility about the individual and societal importance of independent living. Resulting in positive change and in New York State. SSAN Have models for effective outreach and education principles for holding and participating community-based meetings. Dealing with opposition. My favorite engaging the press. The development of a timely safe Medicaid. It also the commitment to advocacy facing opposition and issues fatigue. A workshop on campaigns for social change. This year's SSAN community outreach and education to our grassroots to make real change. And he notes that is the ballot box. Local, state and federal elections looming large it is up to the disability immunity to let candidates know the power of the communities vote. And elect politicians with civil and human rights attendance. Not just a few housekeeping tips before we get started. Closed caption are available for this webinar. You will see a notification in the controls at the top of your screen. Select closed captions. After selecting closed caption you will see the caption on the bottom of your screen. To make adjustments to the caption size click on the arrow next to the startup and click on settings. Click on accessibility. The slider to adjust the caption size. And you may medium or large just as you do a Starbucks. If you have questions during the presentation, click on the q&a a button at the bottom of your screen and type in your question. I will monitor this and relate the questions to speakers. Now during the Q&A portion at the end of the program you will be imputed so we can have open discussion and share your comments. We will start the day talking about voter suppression and stakeholder education with Keri Gray. She is the senior director of stakeholder. And she motivates people with disabilities engage constituents through a variety of platforms. These duties will help support ADPD to serve as a catalyst for change. Increasing the political power of people with disabilities. It is my pleasure to turn it over to Keri, the floor is yours.

» KERI Thank you I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and to meet and chat with everyone who is on the line. I am definitely excited to dive into how are we advancing the disability phone spread how are we ensuring we are mobilizing our community to get engaged. All of that is something that is critical for the success of our community and the advancement of our democracy. is a very important year for our democracy. Every year we know is important but particularly is critical.

And we have important decisions to make that will determine the direction of our country and our quality of life. I have a declaration. On behalf of every American and the pursuit. On behalf of every American that understands the true value of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. And that declaration is to elected officials and candidates. That if disability justice and independent living is not part of your political framework. You are not worthy of our vote. For those candidates go into negotiation rooms around our policies and systems. And disabled Americans are being sacrificed the well-being of our community is being sacrificed to get a win somewhere else then we will say none of us are free until all of us are free and you are also not worthy of our vote.

Now I know our country has a long history of ableism that is inclusive of racism, homophobia, sexism, transphobia and more. You could think that there are so many different obstacles so busy different reasons that are at folks that are representing us across society will not take seriously the voice of disabled Americans. I know we lack disability representation. And it can be a rare and shaky acknowledgment of disability rights. But still I also know that there was a great group of disabled folks that crawled of the Capitol steps to demand change Medela civic engagement. I also know there was a great group of disabled advocates who took over a federal building in California to demand change. That is also civic engagement.

So, essentially four it is really important that we acknowledge that over million voters are people with disabilities. Can you imagine what we can accomplish if we took a united stand to get registered and vote in the November elections? If the visions as we are imagining what we want to accomplish in terms of our people in our community. I think it is important the lessons that in particular has to offer. This year alone has taught us the emergency preparedness. We need elected officials that will prioritize our pandemic. And that will be an example of public safety.

I was talking to one of my colleagues not that long ago. And she is a mother who has a toddler and she was telling me essentially that before the pandemic she was working and anxious and hopeful for more opportunities that she could spend at home with her baby. And she is a working woman she is struggling a lot of different things.

She was talking about with the pandemic it gave her that opportunity. Because things were shutdown from daycare to school. And things of that nature.

Listen, we know that the struggle can be real to all of a sudden house full of people all day everyday quarantine together.

At the same time we know it is us to have representation of our officials and our priorities that are prioritizing our safety. Whether they are looking at how we can get business back open. Right? What is the balance between making sure we have people that understand that need for public safety. And the need for our economy to keep growing? Unfortunately we witnessed in the midst of this pandemic that over 63 million people that are currently on Medicaid services impacted and threatened in some

type of way. We saw a debate around what defines essential services. We are not just talking about the candy store up the street getting shut down. We're talking about public debates around doctors offices, around medication. Around the things essential to your everyday living of life. On the ability to have access. We showed our community that struggled even more so to get the support they need. We know in our community as it is right now before the pandemic. Ensuring we had caregivers getting paid adequately. Showing the the job that they need to do could be a struggle. And now we saw the shutting down of services made that harder. And people are prioritizing not prioritizing the safety benefits of coming into your home. And making sure people have access they need. And so we saw we witnessed our community that was over representative in nursing homes. Mental health facilities in jails and prisons be gruesomely impacted by COVID-. I do not know if you recognize this or not but we are currently in that fight. / is not just a year for us to live through it is not just a year to try and get by. It is a year for us to make sure we are reimagining or re-envisioning our society. And demanding the same type of change that the people who came before us demanded. We know there are many issues at play. And in order for us to work through these we must be clear around the expectations we have for elected officials. And we need to be in spaces where reimagining our society. So essentially how we do that is. We are looking at our political framework. We are looking at political framework. We have to get our house in order. One of the things we need to do are we are bickering about disability instead of unapologetically St. Paul disabled have rights.

While we are dismissing things such as racism. I think what is important as we move into is looking at the loss of the of intersection Independent liberty is a current term. And we need to Tim the -- - we need to engage our democracy knowing we are the best experts of our needs. We can see as conditions and problems to be solved.

It is our responsibility and duty to take a hard look at the issues and people. At the that they of our votes.

from an economic perspective it means supporting disability on businesses. Centers for independent living. And particularly enforcing regulations that prevented discrimination of disabled individuals.

Let me tell you why this is so critical. We are constantly in this cycle of why do we vote? Why is that something we should prioritize? Even the nature of some of us working with various organizations we can understand the significance of it. But we have to that narrative story to the broader community that is struggling and wrestling with believing in the electoral. Let me give you an example of this.

I was talking to one of my students about her career development work. And I was asking her about what the process looks like. She was a young woman in our community is very excited about transitioning to her career. And let me tell you she's the type of person you want on your team. She is the type of person it does not matter what the task is it does not matter what the role is she is going to show up she will contribute she will voice her opinion.

She will bring the type of positive energy to that space. She is the person you want to be working with within your organization.

So she was asking about her career and transitioning into work. And she looked at me with a certain level of sadness because the struggle had been real. She was describing one instance in particular where she found out about a career fair offered on her campus. And she said she prepared for it, she research he had over documents in order and ready to show up. Because the career fair was advertised as a place where she could not only learn about different job opportunities but she could potentially be interviewed and hired on the spot. Right? She got up that running she hopped on a bus. And the bus took her - minutes. Then she hopped on a second but that took her in another - minutes to get to the actual career fair.

So, she got there. And the booth in the recruiter saw she was blind the entire situation shifted.

She walked up to the recruiter saying hi, how is it going I would like to learn more. The recruiter automatically wants to extend his hand to shake her hand. And it turns awkward because he is like, crap, can she see my hand? I have these papers I need her to sign and look over as a consent form. And she can't see the papers I do not know if she can sign this document.

For people with disabilities the story of this narrative is not new. When someone confronts your disability and immediately is taken off guard. And that is not always the worst thing to do. But the problem enters on that awkward situation turns into discrimination.

It is one thing to say I do not know how to say hello? How can we make this happen?

It is another thing to see those barriers and see something you do not understand a turn around and say this is not a good fit. Unfortunately, we see that in our community come time and time again. If we are talking about employment as one instance in the situation.

Then we know we have a lot of work to do to make sure discrimination does not occur. And when we talk about these issues they are not just on an individual basis but they are systemic. Meaning the specific present I am mentioning. She had that circumstance with the career center. It did not go well. It turns awkward it was turned into discrimination which turned into one more time she's not able to get a fair opportunity at employment. She was telling me this story.

She said I have been on 1 different job interviews and more than 90 percent of them have been situations like that.

And that is not just her story of one situation. Knowing the ways that spreads throughout our community. So many people feel we are not worthy of education, employment, healthcare. The list goes on and on. And so it becomes critical as we think about this concept of As we think about our responsibility in civic engagement. That we are thinking and reimagining the ways which we are bearing fruit. Economic prosperity until the ways to be successful. We need people. And we need systems that are fighting for us.

And this philosophy of independent living and disability justice I would say is critical to the advancement of civic engagement across our country. It also have to say it is incomplete unless we are operating their framework of intersection lity.

When we are describing this of our future and how we are talking about how to move forward? How can we make progress across our country?

We have to think about it through thousands of disability justice plus racial justice, gender justice. All the ways our community intersects across our country.

And I mentioned that in particular because if we are thinking about voting who is talking about our issues in a way that does not embrace our full story? The give you an example of this. When describing civic engagement think about woman named Natosha McKenna. Natosha McKenna was a young woman who was institutionalized in a mental health facility in Fairfax County. Right outside of Washington D.C.

Her narrative went viral and the black lives matter movement. Because she was a black woman who was institutionalized. And they were attempting to transfer her from that facility Fairfax County to another facility. Unfortunately the way in which they went about it was extremely fatal. I will not go into too much about it I recommend you do some research. But essentially there is a video Natasha's naked body handcuffed. And you see police officers that are surmounting her body as she is naked in chains. And they essentially -- a minute long video. Of them harming her body through shocks, through a variety of different things as they are attempting to transfer her.

In the midst of that process she does end passing away. And one from last words you hear is you promised you would not choke me.

When I talk about the situation of disability justice and independent living is critical we acknowledge it is very much tied to the oppression we experience and issues such as racism. It is the combination of those two efforts we have to bring up cross into philosophy and make sure that we are actually talking about all of our people. Institutionalization intersects with state violence.

It is more vulnerable for disabled people of color. When we look at the narrative of things that have happened to folks such as Natasha McKenna and to those impacted by violence. We have to recognize how we look and examine our elected officials and community efforts in a way that is inclusive of the full and complete story? Next I will say what do we do about all of this?

We have a vision for the future with no we stand on the shoulder of our ancestors and how to be involved. Going back to the notion need to get our house in order. It is important we notice over million voters with disability eligible across our country is not just a number. But instead is a collective effort of people saying I will sign up. I will ensure that registration happens. And I will utilize my voice. As a nonpartisan organization for people with disabilities.

I would be surprised if many folks in this group are nonpartisan. We do not tell people who to vote for or which party ultimately has your back. Our message is clear there are priorities within the disability community that are important. And it is our responsibility of who you vote for.

We need to get our house in order any of the victories happening in our community. That is not center independent living, disability justice and the framework of intersectionality will not get us closer. We could not talk about disability rights while dismissing sexism, racism, homophobia and Martha will not get us closer to liberation. We have to evolve the way we think. Have to evolve our attitudes. Which will impact our behaviors which will then impact our actions. We have to have standards we stick to.

If not happy with your political options the solution should never be I will not vote. We need to shut that down in our community. important we channeled the bravery of our ancestors and demand the inclusion independent living and intersectionality calls for. I don't it is hard the conversation where it says I do not know who to vote for. I do not know who these people are and the ones I know I do not like. That is a real struggle that can happen year after year in our country. It is so important we look at civic engagement as a way of addressing this. Civic engagement can mean a lot of different things. It can mean voting.

Civic engagement can be volunteering. Civic engagement can be calling representatives and folks across your elected officials. And letting them know exactly what you stand for. It could be gathering folks for a protest. There are a lot of different options to get involved we have seen success through civic engagement. If you look at an example of what is happening across the appraising with black lives matter. Knowing black lives matter is the issue of disability justice. We have seen people have been able to use opportunities to create change.

One of the demands within this has been to arrest the officers of the people who have been killed through state violence. And we saw some success with that. We are not all the way there we have work to do when it comes to addressing the injustices faced by Breanna Taylor.

But we have set in some areas of success when we have seen civic engagement of pushing our country forward. We also see that as we are wrestling with what does it mean to have policing in our schools with children? In some cases we know that could be helpful. In other cases they have disproportionately impacted the punishment of students with disabilities and students of colors in our classroom. And so we have seen success and progress of people are considering whether to renew contracts or redesign the way in which they are functioning.

My point is that regardless of what you stand for it is critically important you voice your opinions. You think critically about our country. And engaged in that process. The next thing I will cover is how do we do that to the disability community? One, I would love to give you some context of the American Association of people with disabilities.

AAPD It is a national nonprofit disability organization. We focus on the political and economic empowerment of people with disabilities all across our country. And we do that through a variety of different programs and initiatives. Whether that is through professional development, technology, transportation. Civil rights, human event. Specifically within AAPD we have an initiative called rev up that means register educate boats use your power. Rev Up Was out of Texas and then AAPD was able to collaborate and take it on as a initiative. Our mission is to foster civic engagement and protect the voting rights of Americans with disabilities. We believe in the power of disabled life and we advocate for the advancement of our community. Within the Rev Up coalition we work with states across the country with voting coalitions.

Or as a network. And basically the premise is we need to do a variety of different things to get people involved. That can definitely be making sure people are registered to vote. That could be around voting that can be around advocating around issues that are important to our community and our country. This week national disability voter registration week is one of the initiatives of the Rev Up campaign. I thought behind this is want to collaborate with disability organizations all across the country. But we also want to think about acknowledging the fact that disability is something -- disability

is still a journey for a lot of people. We know that even though one in five people across the United States have a disability it is still not as common to socially and openly identify with that disability.

There are real and genuine factors that create that to be the case. Essentially we know that stigma, abuse, trauma, and story after story have created situations where people are hesitant to be open about their disability. And in our community we find it important to say here is a space for you. Not only do we want to look at you not as a summation of medical conditions will be acknowledged as a human and person.

Every acknowledged you deserve a raise for education, housing, everything and anything possible. One, we do a lot of work to bring people into the full. And there's a community and space advocating and fighting for your rights, your existence. Even though so many people have told you you are not worth it. The second thing we look at is how to mobilize this community? How do we make sure that we are understanding our options? I think this makes it important to address the issues related to voter accessibility and suppression. We are looking at the standard and typical way. I will come back to specifically in we know / has been quite the year.

Even outside of the specifics of what happened this year we note that voter accessibility and suppression have been an ongoing issue for a long time. Voter accessibility really talks about everyone having access to show up to vote . And to be able to get in without any complications to vote independently in the resources you need to cast your ballot.

Every year we have had complications for insuring voter responsibility because the requirements a infrastructure the building will be assessable. If you need an alternative ballot do to your body functionality. You need to cite blindness or low vision or things of that nature. Those options have to be available for you.

And yet here after your have issues of people able to vote independently. And people to get access to the resources they need. Particularly what we see in is in the midst of the pandemic happening, we saw a lot of the accessibility features being shut down. And at a rapid pace. I will give you an example of this. Across the city of D.C. typically in addition to your standard coworker we have what is called is specific accessibility coworker. These are folks going around to different poll sites majors the infrastructure is set up the way it needs to be. There are interpreters available. The voting machines are assessable. They are going through and making sure of the enforcement of the ability to cast a vote. Unfortunately what happened this year's results all the accessibility teams shut down. And we are then relying on a couple of staff members hired by the government to execute the accessibility across the entire city.

Now that sets us up for failure in a lot of different ways. Because one, that is an issue of capacity. If we are shutting down a number of polling sites across the country there are still some that remain open. And on top of that in addition to the polling sites elected officials, election officials give to folks at institution is still have the right to vote. Now they have to cover in entire city by themselves when they initially had a team working in collaboration with them. The second issue we had is in the midst of all the pandemic escalating. In the primary season we have been in for a while. We thought the rules and regulations of how exactly elections will occur changed overnight and nobody knew how. Thus not only a form of order and accessibility but voter suppression. We saw states that would announce the night before there will only be five polling sites available here are they located. And in some cases we did not even see an announcement about that. People had to do extensive research to figure out what it

means to vote. Voter suppression is everything and anything that holds our community back from being able to access their given right to cast their ballot. One of the things we saw in the midst of rapid changes and all of the different situations when it came to voting in the primaries. We saw that ADA being pitted against human rights regulations in terms of racial justice.

We had a situation particularly in the state of Georgia where they were saying they had to shut down polling sites, even more because not ADA compliant. The issue of that besides from the fact we are rapidly struggling to get any polling sites ADA compliant is that they were shutting down sites in neighborhoods and communities predominantly people of color and low income. And often times we know the intersection that many of those people and of having disabilities. We saw the pitting of our communities against each other instead of a collaborative effort to ensure how do we get people involved in our democracy. And more people voting versus less people voting.

Suppression, traditionally talked about communities of colors which is true. But knowing their intersection of what happens in the disability space and knowing we cannot let it be something or we are fighting against each other.

The final thing I will mention on voter suppression piece is how do we, again. Coming back to addressing this. Knowing that this week is national disability voter registration week. It is critical we open up conversations that allow our community educate one another and get mobilized. This year we focused on what it looks like to get our same effort. Both digital and virtual organizing techniques. That is different a lot of people in our communities. Typically we are grassroots nature or we are meeting people in person. We are talking to people in person experiencing services. Making sure people feel secure. And all -- everything related to many upcoming elections. This year we were examining how to do that same thing through a virtual nature. One of the things we encourage folks to do is leverage the technology that is assessable. We have a partnership with the organization called Help Us All Vote, that is a nonprofit voting organization. They allow for us to have a voting portal for you can get registered to vote online in an assessable way. We have to think about what are the techniques we can use the levels to accomplish the same goal even if it looks different. In addition to that tomorrow AAPD is hosting a Rev Up the vote festival.

One of the things we saw was popular during the pandemic is more and more people are looking for ways to connect to community. To have a good time. Even if through a virtual platform. And so we saw this year that a lot of virtual concerts became popular. A thought of battles between artists became popular. All of these things are things we can leverage not just for entertainment but as an opportunity for people to get more involved. While we are in the midst of having an interesting and exciting activity we want to get people registered. Tomorrow AAPD is hosting the Rev Up the folk Festival. Love different musicians, remarks from public figures. And community members across the country.

That lineup will be engaging will be interesting it will be fun. And it will be an opportunity for us to talk about the issues we need to be prioritizing across our country. That is one example.

We also want to think about social media and marketing. And ultimately the program and initiative we can enact across our country to ensure that people are continuing to be involved in our democracy.

Rev Up is a platform. It is a network it is a campaign it is an opportunity for folks to get involved. And to mobilize the disability vote. Those who can get involved in the local and state level and also on a national level.

Again, I want to go over a couple of the concepts one more time. And wrap up with any thoughts on how to mobilize. As we are looking at being a critical here. For determining the direction of our country and the quality of our life. It is critical for us to determine what is that space? What are the issues need to be prioritizing as a community of people? Do we have elected officials who are talking about emergency preparedness? Are talking about institutionalization?

That is soliciting and involving the community and speaking in a way that we don't take this into consideration? How can we make sure it is our response? How can we enforce the idea in knowing it is our duty and responsibility to engage? That is cutting off the bickering. Understanding the issues that are important. And getting people critically involved.

Finally, the think I will mention is fighting against voter suppression and ensuring water -- voter accessibility. There has been a lot of information about vote by now. We have transitioned to the majority of our country transitioning to a process where you can vote by now. And I will say largely that does work for a lot of people across our country.

But the issue we need to get that it is not assessable to every American across our country. And if that is the case that cannot be our ultimate goal. We have seen the failure of the electoral process. Again based on what is happening in the midst of the pandemic. And come November we have a chance to ensure that all of those are no longer failures better opportunities for folks to get involved. And so in order to do that we need your voice. We need your participation within your partnership. And we need folks to think about the ways we can expand our partnerships and relationships. That means the inclusive in the disability, with women's rights, LGBTQ rights and so much more. We need to think about how can we partner with the broader civil rights community? How can we build relationships that we can show other people what it means to advocate for disability justice. And independent living? And also have to turn around and learn from the broader civil rights community about ensuring we are doing more about initiatives that are inclusive of people of color. In all of our different intersection. So I want to leave you with this idea of getting involved. And the voting initiative if you have not already there could be AAPD Rev Up campaign.

That could be what is happening in your local area. I want to leave you that it is your duty and responsibility to fight for our freedom and liberation. After the philosophy of independent living nobody can do that better than we can. And I want to make sure you're not perpetuating any of the ideas that make us think that our lives are not worth living. And that elected officials if they choose not to include us. We will hope again for the next four years. Instead we will turn around and say there is no way you are worthy of our vote or worthy of our allies votes if you are not including us in your initiatives. I want to thank you you for your time. I want to encourage you to get involved. I want to encourage you to learn about voter suppression were happy to work with you any of those things.

» RON Thank you that was impressive. We will now open it up for questions. At the bottom of your screen you will see a Q&A button type in your question I will look at that and be happy to forward that to Keri educate respond to everybody. Take a moment for questions and answers. Keri I have a question. How does the New York landscape compared to other political? How does the landscape get more difficult or easier to accomplish the goals are talking about the last minutes?

» KERI New York is definitely in an interesting position. Because we know the state of New York has some of the highest numbers impacted by the pandemic. And we were talking earlier about how it is a popular city. Even though a lot of transportation has been minimized over the last few months. There are still a lot of people who come in and out of the city. And a lot just live across the state. Knowing the fact that people are trying to do their best just play it safe. Which contrary to some people's opinions. We are still somewhat of a quarantine. And knowing the fact it is our duty to make sure we participate we have to find that balance. What is the areas that we want to make sure that happens is getting people more involved in vote by now. The kids folks to vote by home. To feel good about the research they can do around the option. And the opportunity to say. And making sure there are alternatives and make sure people are participating. What we are asking participants to unmute so we can ask a question directly. Is that correct, Robin? Everybody has been given the ability to speak as they would like to have a conversation.

» RON Open for suggestions also.

» RON One question as people are thinking about this. What you consider the hurdles in New York State. With accomplishing very specific recommendations you have?

» KERI Okay. I was reading through the captions for that. And just to clarify your talking about more understanding of the obstacles or more of the solutions?

» RON Let's do a little bit of both.

» KERI In terms of the obstacles one I would have to say that we will get into a little more of the specifics around voter suppression and assess ability. But honestly one of our biggest obstacle is getting people registered to vote. And getting people to want to engage in our democratic process. This is an issue that exists throughout our entire country. Where the more and more folks to get signed up and participate.

It could be a particular obstacle if a person with disability. Because he might have a specific need one getting registered. And understanding. You might need claim -- plain text and basic language. And there could be different things that could be one step away from your wanting to participate.

I think that goes back to some of the comments we were seeing earlier. Some do not want to participate because they do not know who is running. We may hear the name of the person running for president they get a lot of news cycle and attention. But we need people voting for governor, mayor, school district appointments, and judges. And there are all different types of positions that need to be vote for, and often they are not getting enough attention. And not enough individual investigation for folks who want to engage.

The education component becomes critical. And it is hard, too. Since we have been in the midst of this pandemic the traditional ways we would reach are not existent. It could be standard and easy for someone to host an event at your office. An invite the community out.

Or there might be another event going on and it can be common to have a huge festival that is going on in your community. As an organization or group of advocates show up to the festival and share

a message around people registering to vote in this upcoming election. But those things are not really happening right now.

» RON And that dovetails Bill in the fields. And he said any ideas for reaching out to folks who are disabled and are not with typical connections but the digital divide?

» KERI That is one I have to say that is a really real situation. Because we are trying to figure out what it needs to stay connected to people we have transitioned into quote, unquote a more untraditional society. In terms of some of the solutions to that. What if the things we've had people to is in a safe social distancing practicing way. There are still certain locations you can go to to reach potential voters. One is still to places with these services. If there are food pantries. If your local grocery store, places that people inevitably still end having to go to o.

» RON Yes.

» KERI It is possible to have a representative or some type of messaging that is posted around those buildings to reach people. And also can have phone banking or text banking they can have a phone line. There are certain platforms you can use to start calling people and letting them know elections are coming up we need to make sure you're registered and participating. And there are opportunities you can text folks along the way and say this is how you can plug in. And reach out to us if you have more information. Those are a couple ways to think about reaching folks outside of Internet connection. But I think those are places we can explore more creatively.

» RON That is good. Other questions from the field either unmute and talk to us or type of question in the Q&A box.

» Hi, there can you hear me?

» RON Yes I just want to say, Keri, I resonated with what is said.

»> I am a difficult person to vote, I as a person with disability I feel completely unheard. But when I heard you talk it set with me I appreciate everything you had to say. It offers a different perspective so I appreciate that.

» RON We are glad to hear that. Thank you for offering that.

» KERI Thank you for your comment. I do want to say I cannot \_ enough for challenging enough it is to think about voting as an organizer as an employee we need to think of that. I have been a number of conversations where people find it frustrating. And they respond to the presidency. Or sometimes straight up in difference people have by saying you do not have a right to complain about anything in our country. Although theoretically you may respond in that type of way it is still not helping us get closer and closer to our goal. I think one of the things we can do is be honest about addressing the reason why people are struggling with engaging in our process. Often times we need more relatability from our candidates and elected officials. Who really understand what the everyday person is going through. And it did not feel you're getting that level of recognition or understanding it can cause a lot of people to pull back. And that is just one example.

I think it become so critical for us on our end to say let's bring it up. Let's talk about if we are not hearing enough what is happening right now we will bring that. And we will hold our elected accountable. And speaking about it. One of the things that AAPD did in collaboration. The national Council on Independent living as we release a presidential survey for the candidates. And if you remember a few months ago we had 1 million Democratic candidates running for president. And we got quite a few of them to fill out. Especially the top-tier folks to fill out the survey. And that was just one example one step of accountability. Because it forces their team to think about the issues that are top priority and out there now and how they will address them. And if they are not doing it now and trying to rush the priority in after getting into office. By that point they will have a number of conflicting priorities. And again, I just think how can we as organizers step up to create the conversation that need to occur? And push our country forward.

» RON Other questions, folks?

» Hi.

» RON Hi.

» Just a couple of -- some pieces of information but maybe Keri and others have information to add.

Last week the League of Women Voters and the campaign legal Center filed a lawsuit against New York State Board of elections regarding mail in or absentee ballots. And a primary plaintiff in the case is a woman who has a neurological condition that causes tremor. And she fears that her inconsistent handwriting would cause an absentee ballot to be ejected because of the signature mismatch.

New York in discarded more than ,0 absentee ballots or about percent of all absentee ballots cast because they do not have a way to notify voters and give them an opportunity to respond if the ballot is in danger of not being counted. I am mentioning this because this case has just been introduced. And hoping to see how it will be resolved and hope it gives resolved well before the November election. And the other thing is the very good idea that was mentioned about the survey for the candidates on disability agenda.

By about people running for Congress. And others. I think we should consider that. People running for state office as well as local office. Do you have a disability agenda and would you publicize that? Before the election?

That is a really good idea. And I know any people in the stands house have opportunities to meet the candidates and debate participation. In which case in this cases they ask people. This year we have to do a whole lot more with social media and virtually and we have had to do in the past. Not only to register people but to get people running for office to come forward and actually tell us what your thoughts are. And what they are willing to do if elected. Thank you.

» RON Very good points, Sue, thank you for following. Would you following that case is it of particular interest to you?

» Absolutely I will be following up. I am active with the League of Women Voters. And I will send that information about that case to Megan and she can distribute it. I think we all need to be paying attention to that case. And Megan can talk about the other case. About the access to requesting absentee ballots. Because there were issues with that during the primary we suspect there will be more issues with that this fall.

» Count on it, absolutely.

» RON Questions from the field? Trent us. Anybody else either through Q&A, the chat box, or live with a microphone.

» There is a question from Phil in the chat box.

» RON There is. [Phone excuse me for that. He said on abandoned absentee ballots, our group should meet with local POE commissioners desk is a plan to reduce the number of abandoned. There is a problem with electric neck signature pad that imprisoned voters with disabilities and impaired there ability to sign.

» KERI I think it is the local board of election and the local board of elections also can be secretaries of state. That have a lot of weight when it comes to determining the regulations are taking in the voting process. As a your comment around a specific act.

There are just a number of things we need to be getting board of election, secretaries of State to not just address widely and broadly. But specifically how will we ensure that absentee ballots are being we ensure the folks you are mentioning that is a real problem. And I think released to what we described earlier with vote now. There will be in inconsistency and signature some who cannot get a signature. And how do we ensure we have the right to participate? It is responsibility of these groups to get that figured out. At the very least we can voice what concerns are. We could be advocating aggressively and often to make sure they get addressed.

Because it would not be fruitful to ignore. There are a lot of questions and concerns happening around our voting process. And we need to make sure you're doing everything from our community. I just very much agree with you and I think that is an area all of us can go behind.

» RON Very good question, Phil, thank you for asking that. Anybody else from the field?

» This is Megan thank you for a great presentation. And I really appreciated you talking about our need to make sure that we are being intersectional in our work. Talking about intersectionality and into black lives matter right now. And I wondered if you had any suggestions for us as viewers, and how we can do a better job. Maybe reporting what black lives matters are doing and bringing our issues to them. So we can be intersectional about the movement. But also how to be funneled that into getting people engaged In the upcoming election?

» KERI Definitely love that. I would say it is important we do everything that we can to get this by in process around intersecting justice was racial justice. And I say that as the honest truth. There have been and what of examples and circumstances we bring up racial justice and disability spaces. The people are like why are we talking about this? Why is there something even an issue on the table? What does it have to do with us? Unfortunately we know it has everything to do with us. The majority of

people with disabilities are people of color. But we would not always know that with the way we work. I think it is important we do an assessment of where we are in terms of leadership. In terms of staff. In terms of programs and initiatives that are built around being inclusive of our various intersections. And those are usually on conversations and a bite in process that takes time. It is not something you can take one that people are completely behind you. It is a journey and the process that I think usually takes a good period of time to get it to where we want it to be. I think in addition to that is a great opportunity to get plugged in. Because of the unfortunate death of folks like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and so many people. We are experiencing the uprising across our country right now. And for folks on social media. You may be following hashtag black lives matter you might also be following hashtag black lives disabled persons matter. That has been around for a while but it is really a place to ignite a level of bravery. I think in the midst of appraising in general can be intimidating. And scary. But particularly appraising in the midst of a pandemic is supposed to get involved? One of the things we wanted to do is encourage folks who -- I have a prosthetic limb. If I have been to participate in the protest and I need to take off running that is not going to be an option. After make a conscious decision stand your ground. I went out to one of the protest with a friend of mine who is blind. She also had to make a decision I will not know exactly where to go to navigate the space. All that to say regardless of what your disability is we will to show people as possible to get involved. The protesting is one option you're interested in.

But it is not just have to be protesting. There is a lot of advocacy right now about how we address state violence. How we address if I am calling for help on somebody having an episode right now. They are also a person of color that they do not end in a fetal situation. Because there is a lack of disability justice. And so we just have to examine what is our role what is our place. That advocacy of financial assistance. Is that protesting? Is that internal programs and initiatives? There are a lot of different options. But I think as we make that decision we will get closer.

The second thing I will say to that is you mentioned getting the civil rights community. Particularly racial justice involved in racial justice and I agree with that. Because we know that as we get to groups that are not within the disability space. They may have a lack of understanding or lack of inclusion of what it means to amplify to disability.

That is something we saw with hashtag black disabled lives matter. Were uplifting the names of people who have been given to state violence. But we were not always acknowledging a person with disability. For instance Tony McCabe is a name we were amplifying through the movable River not talking about his disability. Those pieces of information become important for us to work with groups around. This is not to embrace that part of the narrative. Because it is part of history. Right? Working with folks to collaborate. Because they have genuine questions and concerns. If people are organizing any type of activity that is routed around racial justice. They are not familiar with disability justice they will start to question how are we supposed to bring people? How are we supposed to communicate with folks who are deaf and hard of hearing?

And I think that goes back to what were talking about earlier with my student. At the awkward situations Leigh discrimination. We want to prevent that across all community places. I opened up those lines of communications. And starting with a couple of projects that we can collaborate on can make a huge difference.

» RON Any other questions out there? We are looking at a five minute break here and coming back shortly. Any other questions before we go to break? Very good. Let's take a five minute break we will see you at eight minutes after 2. Thank you.

» RON Welcome back everyone we will continue our discussion with Keri Gray and talk about REV UP tools and resources.

» KERI For the next part I want to share more about REV UP and the resources we have people plugged in around civic engagement. It looks like I cannot share my screen. I will do a verbal representation of that. And if folks happen to be by a computer I recommend you go to [AAPD.com/advocacy/voting](http://AAPD.com/advocacy/voting) I will share that in the chat right now so people.

» I been able to share you can do it now.

» KERI Let me see. Here we go. This is the REV UP website this is our hub for those wanting to get involved in working more with partners. We connect folks that are in your state. We do as much as we can to connect folks with organizers across the entire country. And we have our national initiatives as well. The first thing I would mention on the REV UP you can scroll to the bottom of the page. There is a link that says join the REV UP email campaign. This is the easiest way to know about policy initiatives that we are working on. And also around different campaigns. And that we are running. He is already on our email list you will have information about national voter registration week and the REV UP festival we are hosting tomorrow. When navigating REV UP and how we go about various initiatives. The first place I would point out for folks looking to get registered to vote this is our first way to go about this. People can click on register to vote it will take you to REV UP portal. This portal link is available for all disability advocates to use. You do not have to be a person with a disability to get registered on this platform. But we wanted to create it for the disability community.

On this platform it shows on the top left that we partnership through . The organization I was mentioning when we all followed. It has the AAPD logo and REV UP logo. Behind that the information on to register to vote. Folks can take in information you can select the language is not an English speaking person. It will get you all signed up and ready to go. We encourage you to utilize this on your work and on individual capacity and get registered. The next thing I will point out is we have a hub four things related to the upcoming election.

When you go to this webpage we break down your options. It can be an immediate space we look up voter registration deadlines. Which is important for folks doing absentee dollars needing to make sure they are registered in time. There is a to go to learn more information about local and state elections and initiatives. If you want to look at an initiative of where your ballot is you need to see who is running for different positions. And if -- there are sublinks for more information along the way. This is a good place. Particularly for the election originally it was a lot more information on here. As we mentioned there were a lot of candidates who were running. So many months ago. Originally we had a long list of people that were running.

We had information around their disability policies and platforms. Anything we could find that connected them to the disability community. Some of that is archived in case there is ever a reason you want to go back and say what did Senator Warren say about disability policy? What did Castro the different candidates say?

As you know the policy focus is one that Vice President Biden and President Trump put on this website it will take you to their campaign website. It will show their responses to the AAPD/NCIL presidential questionnaire and the information we were able to gather about the relationship with disability and policy priorities on that.

And then another area you would likely use a lot when it comes to the disability vote and REV UP network is the page for community organizers. When you click on this page there are definitely a number of options. The premise behind this is how do we make sure everyone is equipped with the resources need to mobilize the disability We talk about those who are interested in the REV UP of the coalition and information about , what is a REV UP REV UP coalition. There is one page that will give you starter information. And once you are pulled in. When you sign up for the network we do orientation. We have more details to get plugged into the election. I will say that following national disability voter registration week the end of this week we are planning on doing assertive outreach across the country. We are looking to get a clear understanding of civic engagement work for the community across our country.

I mentioned or may have mentioned REV UP started in . And since then we have grown so much. At a deeper assessment of what kind of programs and initiatives voting coalitions are doing for the first time. And have not done so yet. If you are not already on our email list and ready to sign up. Lots of opportunities on how to plug in, what does it mean to plug in. 26 How do we get connected to various 26 people in your area.

This tab is I think a good resource for folks. We hosted power the disability vote a separate on elections and disability and election summit. This happened a couple weeks ago there were a variety of speakers and panels. The reason I bring this up is people are able to listen to the playback of it. The presentations were about collaborating with the broader civil rights community. Or about collaborating with election officials. There were conversation and presentations on all of those segments. If you are able to look at the agenda for each day and watch the playback. To get all of that information.

I will say it was an engaging experience. You will see on this page over 8 folks participated live we continue to have people watching the playback. And the checkbox was very interactive. I think it is a good resource. The other I would say is we were able to help participation both Vice President Biden and President Trump's campaign. Vice President Biden spoke himself. So on our website you are able to view his remarks and see how he describes his ability policy and priorities. And then for President Trump he had his senior advisor for the Trump campaign Lara Trump get response. And also Maria Town the vice president CEO had a talk back with surrogate people from her campaign election as well.

These are resources that folks can use in their work to learn more and to share particularly with the presidential candidates. Kind of where they stand. In addition to that we have an entire page that is dedicated to resources for boating - voting organizers. When you look at this page 1 of the things that you will notice is that there is this continued conversation about what are the issues important to the disability community. Unemployment is that education? Is that transportation? Granted all of these issues are important. And then thinking about how do we interact those issues with candidates? That is why AAPD has a voting guide and has an understanding of someone asking what does it mean to get involved in disability issues? And we also have several other issues on our website. You can see assess ability is an issue. One of the things that happened in was that originally all of the presidential candidates and of their websites were assessable. Two people who use screen readers. And so that

becomes a situation where it is prohibiting people's access. To know who is voting for access and if they should vote for them.

Thankfully, that became awake when people started to advocate across our industry we saw a change. We saw people were figuring out how to be assessable. The is his ability toolkit shows some of the foundational areas. Whether that is board of elections, whether the candidate to remove barriers when it comes to voting.

There is quite a bit of information on here if you scroll through. There are a lot of connections to various organizations that do disability work in a variety of ways.

You will see resources on here from government, state, and national officials. You will see information from places like the Bazelon, Rock the Vote, a variety of organizations that cover the bases. And as you can see I am scrolling, scrolling on this page. There is quite a bit of information here. in.

I will also definitely point out national disability voter registration week which is where we are at right now. In case you are not getting plugged in and involved we have a couple of easy tools so you can participate now. The main area I would direct people to is our social media toolkit. Went on our page we do automatic post. That your organization can use but you can post them on the website. You can post them across social media. We can use them in different ways to spread the issue about the disability vote and get people registered and engaged. If you get involved in any type of way. We are planning to connect all of the state advocates so that we know who is doing what and how you can plug and with other people from across the state.

There are a number of different resources on here. And please to get plugged in. And ways to get plugged in. I want to go to the original date I want to point out the census in the midst of everything going on with voting, the census happening every years across our country.

It is critically important that we are pointing out that people should get counted. And I mentioned that because this year with the pandemic the Census was extended. Originally everyone around this time we would be wrapping up when the Census gets finalized. But now with the pandemic the Census has been extended to October. If I am not mistaken. That gives us essentially more time to make sure we are reaching people. One of the things we are hosting on our website is a project that we did to really promote the Census. note that partners are able to use this. I am going to share a different version of this screen. Census matters is a campaign we helped develop for folks to use in promoting the Covid. The premise behind this is the Census distributes a lot of resources to your community. And it helps with the essential pieces of day to day lives. We wanted to create a poster with connect a simple image and describe why it is important to be counted in the Census. Just as an example of this on this slide shows an image of a couple of schoolbooks and a pencil, a ruler, and Apple. And it is essentially a post about education. And the post beside it says completing the Census can help you get the education you deserve.

More than 7 million children in America rely on special education and early intervention services. To support the need to succeed at school but complete the Census secure funding and secure a happy healthier future by completing the Census today. I sure that is one example. This is a resource we will be posting on our website soon. And we really want to encourage people to participate in the final push at getting people counted and making sure that resources are available across our community.

The campaign covers education. We talk about Medicaid as an essential piece. We get Medicaid funding from your state based on people 38 filling out the Census. We talk<sup>38</sup> about how Medicaid impacts children with disabilities. In the image of an asthma pump. And health coverage and prescriptions are big part of Medicaid there is an image of -- what are those? The scope things I forget the name. So, Medicaid and housing and employment. Are the areas we cover in this process. Again as we post that we encourage people to use this. To hype up the fact that we need people to continue getting counted in the Census leading up to the deadlines. And so I will go back to our website. I will point out two more things and then open it up for any final questions or comments people may have. Another initiative we are working on this year. For the first time we launched a program called the Fannie Lou Henner scholarship foundation. This is disability with racial justice and others as well. The Fannie Lou Hamer is an initiative we designed specifically for young. Folks ages to . Black, disabled advocates.

And we named the program after Fannie Lou Hamer for folks who may not be familiar with her here is a picture of her. She is a black woman she has. She is really holding a microphone and she has four other individuals in the photo like she is speaking at a rally. Essentially Fannie Lou Hamer is known for her work around the rate to vote and the right to vote for black folks in the South especially Mississippi. She did a lot to fight for people's representations at a time when there was blatant rules and regulations that would prevent people of color from voting particularly black votes. But what does not get talked about enough is that Fannie Lou Hamer she did this advocacy while having disabilities.

As a child she had polio. And something that can be common his people with disabilities have situations of trauma. Fannie Lou Hamer Was thrown into jail at 1.4 trying to execute her right to vote. When she was thrown into jail she was beaten went in there. To the point they had permanent disabilities. When she came out she walked with a limp and had damage across her body. But even after that situation she did not stop fighting for the right to vote.

We named this in honor of her legacy. Essentially the program has three components. The first component is our organizers through political education. They talked about the state of our elections in . They talked about how to build a campaign that reaches people at the issues related to voter suppression and assess ability. What was great about the political education in the midst of the organizers learning a lot. And getting prepared to launch a campaign. Is that is a good way to build relationships with the broader of all rights community. Through the political education we essentially were able to get speakers and partner with organizations such as color of change, Center for American progress, Stacey Abrams verified, the board of elections.

There are a few other organizations Alliance for Justice, the national urban league, and the folks are available with the disability rights of Pennsylvania. These are some great partnership. We are essentially going to turn around and the organizers in the process of phase 2 which is campaign preparation. Essentially building the content and material for their campaign. Come September they will launch that campaign and come September through the November elections you will see messaging. You will see videos. You will see emails. You will see meetings and activities that are talking about all of the issues related to the intersection of the black vote and disability vote.

That is one way we could do more activities of engagement that center experience of people who have mostly been marginalized. The final thing I will mention is our disability issues and advocacy page. The I am not the biggest policy person I am more so the mobilization piece the civic engagement piece. All of that is a strong relationship. And so when you go to our advocacy page you can see the

areas we have done a lot of focus on. For the loss of many years that is immigration, community integration, education, transportation, etc. Our areas of focus.

Also if you go to our policy position & on letters. Page and scroll toward the middle. You will start to see what are the active policies that we are advocating for or against in ?

One of the things I think is important to note is that issues are not partisan. We are not talking about vote for this person or vote for this person. We are talking about the issues critical for us to address when it comes to the momentum of our country. As so, for instance. You will see what is going on with COVID-. The relief packages that have been passed or in the process of potentially getting past. You will see information that talks about our stanza what is happening with nursing homes and with elected assistance. And there have been information around racial justice and policing. There is quite an extensive list and this is not even all of it that goes over what are the priorities and policies that we should be looking at. To make sure that folks are treated fairly across our country. So, in a nutshell that shows a little bit of how to navigate our website. Again we encourage folks to get involved. Join our listserv.

We will get you connected to people across our state. If you want to know more of these plugged in at national disability voter registration week. Plugging into an initiative such as the summit. That is an area that we are most willing to talk about. Again I want to thank you you. Let you know if you have any questions any thoughts

» RON Thank you, Keri, that is one impressive website and one impressive presentation. We will open it up for folks in the field. And chime in here or use the Q&A box on the bottom of your screen.

Keri, How long did this take you to produce this material? Was this a one year project or have you been working on this for a bit of time?

» RON It is a rolling basis type of things.

» KERI The partnership have made it to put some of those on. For instance at AAPD were not trying to climb we are an expert on Deaf culture but we have a organization with Sign Vote, and they release resources around the intersections of the Deaf community and electoral justice. And we work with them they have a toolkit, they have a resource. We put that on the website can connect to them. The same goes along with other organizations that are focusing on.

There are some groups looking at the institutionalization part of this conversation. And what does it mean to make sure that people are able to vote and things of that nature. This would not have been possible without real partnerships.

» RON The political culture here in Albany the importance of coalition cannot be overestimated. Politicians respond to money and participation in size of the groups. Just talk to a minute while we are getting some questions here about what coalition building means and why it is important for both members of the community as well as legislators?

» KERI It is so critical. I think there are so many things we want to accomplish. And we are constantly having to design and shape that vision based on resources. Based on capacity, based on

knowledge. That is where our partnerships become critical. We have a goal this year going into that we want to get people with disabilities registered to vote.

And AAPD has the capacity to make so much of that happened. But what will make it possible for working with people across the country are promoting this message that voting is important. And that is what we wanted to partner with a variety of different disability organization. But we wanted to partner with places like Rock the Vote that have an extensive network that know how to reach people. They are great about amplifying the work of others. And highlighting something great going on. We were able to get a couple of voter registration portals through their network. AAPD does not technically a partner that ensures we have access to one becomes critical. Even things like being able to get Vice President Biden and President Trump's campaign to participate. That was made possible through partnership and they said we will reach out to the picture this is a priority on their agenda. The relationship building only continues as we build.

» RON The power of numbers and it works. In the local elections and the state and house. Any questions from the field before we wrap this up?

Very good thank you, Keri, and thank you for attending everyone today. We appreciate your engagement and for independent living across New York State. As a reminder please complete the evaluation form. We value your input and your ideas for future programs. Now please mark your calendar to join us next month for part three and that is Geo RV get out the Vote that will be Wednesday, August 9. From one-3 PM. It will feature Andy League from the League of Women Voters. And a roundtable of independent representatives from around the state. Again we appreciate meeting with us today and until next time be safe and be well.