

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Rules
From: Tina Argetsinger, Portland, OR

The first election I was old enough to vote in was in November 1986. I was a freshman in college at the University of Oregon. I waited in a long, winding line for hours to vote, only to find out I was at the wrong polling location. As a person with a disability that affects my mobility and ability to stand for long periods, I was exhausted and in a lot of pain afterward. I didn't vote that day. It also had a chilling effect. I don't know how many years it was before I voted again. At the time, I was registered Republican.

I am one of the [one in four Americans](#) with a disability, [including one in four Oregonians](#). I was born with a type of rare bone disease called [Osteogenesis Imperfecta \(OI\)](#), also known as "Brittle Bone Disease." I am also a parent of a teenage son, who has [ADHD](#), a neurological disorder, and I have parents and in-laws dealing with different [age-related disabilities](#).

Chances are you have a disability yourself or someone in your family does and have an instinctive understanding of the stigma and discrimination that people with disabilities face daily due to [ableism](#), including in voting.

According to the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)^{*}, a nonpartisan, national disability-led and cross-disability rights organization, there are over [38 million people with disabilities who are eligible to vote](#). Unfortunately, Americans with disabilities face many obstacles and barriers to voting. In 2020, voters with disabilities were [nearly twice as likely](#) as

nondisabled voters to experience problems with voting. These problems come from inaccessible polling places and voting equipment, difficulty getting to the polling place, lack of access to vote by mail efforts, and election officials and poll workers who haven't been trained about how to provide disability access. Additionally, tens of thousands of seniors, people with mental health conditions, and intellectual disabilities have been disenfranchised in 39 states due to laws that strip some people under guardianship of their right to vote.

What voting rules make voting accessible?

- Expanding access to early voting and same-day voter registration.
- States automatically sending mail-in ballots to all registered voters.
- Allowing voters to receive and fill out ballots electronically before printing them out and sending them in.
- Writing ballots in plain language.
- Making state election websites more accessible.

What voting rules make it harder for disabled people to vote?

- Reducing the amount of time voters have to request or mail in ballots.
- Restricting the available drop-off locations.
- Imposing stricter voting requirements. Examples include:
 - Requiring a voter's signature submitted with their mail-in ballot to match a previous signature, which can exclude the ballots of voters with vision, mobility, or other disabilities that impact the consistency of their signature
 - Stricter voter-ID requirements, which limits the types of IDs voters can use when casting a ballot

- Requiring a witness or notary for vote-by-mail ballot
- Not allowing curbside or drive-thru voting.
- Restricting who can provide assistance to disabled voters.

(*The above is from the [REV UP Voting Issues Guide: A Tool for Voters and Candidates to Understand Key Issues Impacting People with Disabilities](#) - This resource is produced by the [American Association of Disabilities \(AAPD\)](#) and their [Rev Up National Voting Campaign](#). REV UP stands for “Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power!” While REV UP is a national campaign, their focus is on the state and local level. They have [coalitions and partners across the U.S.](#), however, currently not in Oregon. Their mission is to build the power of the disability vote through increasing civic engagement in the disability community and improving the accessibility of elections.)

Oregon – NOTE: *The CDC info has been edited since the Trump/DOGE administration took over and edited “DEI” info from federal websites. CDC links were from Fall 2024).*

Percentage of adults in Oregon with select functional disability types

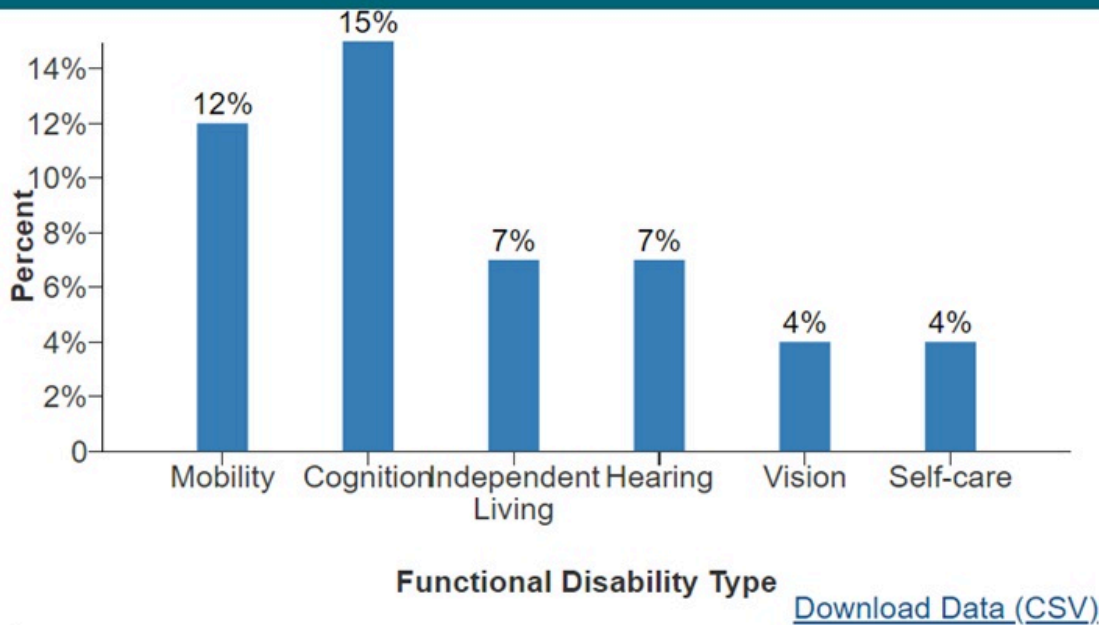


Table from [CDC, Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Oregon \(Adults 18+ years of age\)](#). This illustrates the percentages of people with select types of functional disabilities in Oregon, including ambulatory, cognitive, vision and hearing impairments, as well as disabilities affecting self-care and independent living.

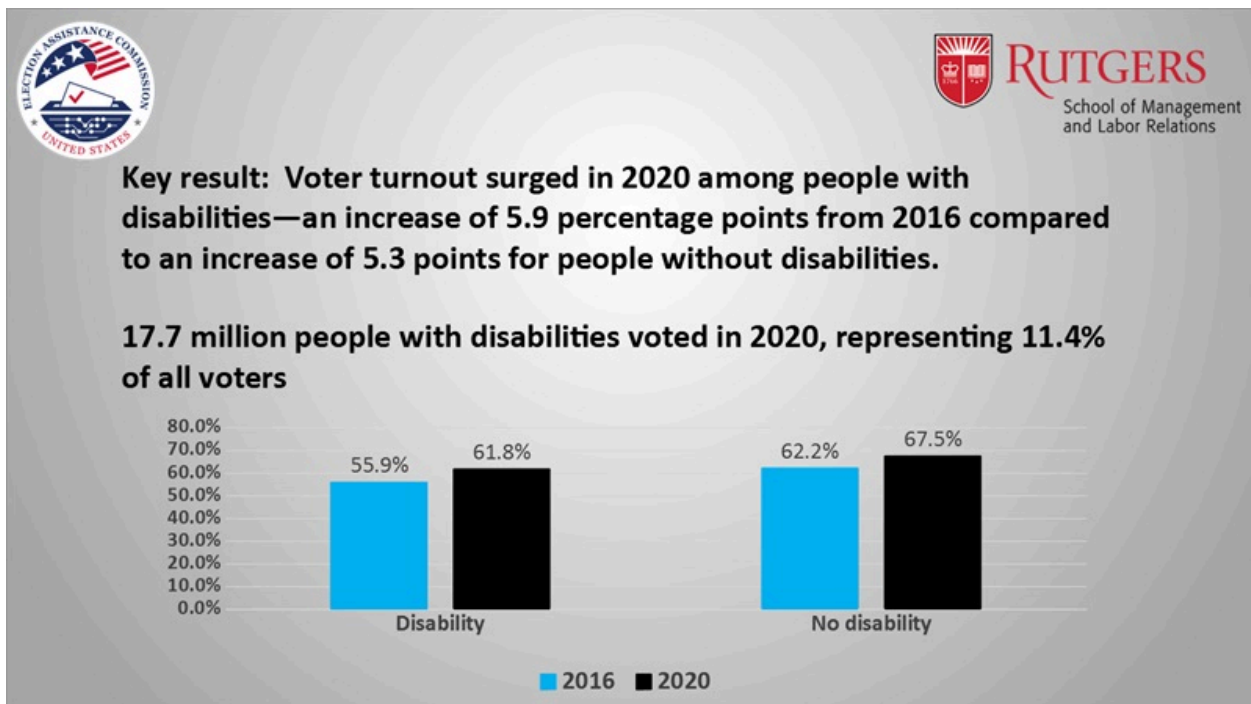
Although not perfect, Oregonians with disabilities have had an **accessible vote-by-mail system** for many years. Oregon voters have long cast their ballots by mail in many types of elections, including for local, state and federal offices. They started doing so in 1987 – and have voted exclusively by mail in all elections since 1998.

According to the [2025 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#), [which brings together an array of disability data from across many sources](#),

disability turnout in Oregon for the 2022 elections was as follows:

- There were 281,000 eligible voters with disabilities eligible to vote in 2022, or 13% of the total electorate.
- There were 1,904,000 eligible voters with no disability. *This does not include those who did not have a disability but lived in a household with someone with a disability.*

[In Oregon](#), voter turnout increased in 2022 by 2.4 points among citizens with disabilities relative to the 2018 midterm elections.



Slide 4 from [Douglas Kruse](#) and [Lisa Schur](#), professors at Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, presentation at the [2021 Disability Vote Summit](#) about the disability vote in the 2020 election.

Despite numerous barriers, [voter turnout surged in 2020 among people with disabilities](#).

It was an increase of 5.9% points from 2016 and that's compared to an increase of 5.3 percentage points for people without disabilities. We see that 17.7 million people with disabilities voted in 2020. That represents 11.4% of all voters. So we see a real increase here.

People with disabilities are historically more likely than those without disabilities to vote by mail. About 5% more likely in general. The 2020 Census data showed that only one-fourth, 26% of voters with disabilities voted at a polling place on Election Day, the traditional method of voting compared to 31% of voters without disabilities. **[Douglas Kruse](#) and [Lisa Schur](#), professors at Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, report: [Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections: Final Report on Survey Results Submitted to the Election Assistance Commission](#)**

Transportation can be a barrier for many [people with disabilities](#) as well as [older people](#). All too often, people with disabilities, older adults, and [lower-income people](#) lack affordable, reliable transportation to get to fully participate in our democracy.

For People with Disabilities, the Urban-Rural Divide is Especially Real

[2024 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2024Annual Disability Infographic: Experiences of People with Disabilities in Rural America](#)

DEFINING PLACE

Urban Counties:

- Metropolitan counties: urban core of 50,000+ people

Rural Counties:

- Micropolitan counties: urban core of 10,000-50,000
- Non-Core counties: no urban core (< 10,000 people)

DISABILITY PREVALENCE BY COUNTY

3,127,000 people with disabilities live in the most rural counties

- Metropolitan 12.1%
- Micropolitan 16.1% Non-Core (Most Rural) 17.8%
- Non-Core (Most Rural) 17.8%

EMPLOYMENT

People with disabilities, ages 18-64, in the most rural places have the lowest employment-to-population ratio

- Metropolitan 39.6%
- Micropolitan 35.4%
- Non-Core (Most Rural) 32.5%

POVERTY

- 1 in 3 children under age 18 with disabilities in the most rural places experience poverty compared to 1 in 4 children under age 18 with disabilities in the most urban places experience poverty

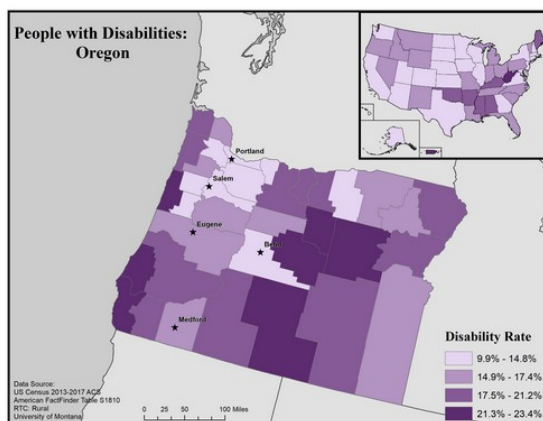
HEALTH

People with disabilities in the most rural places report:

- Lower rates of Private coverage
- Higher rates of Public coverage than people with disabilities in other areas*
 - *Metropolitan: Private 49.7%, Public 72.6%
 - Micropolitan: Private 47.8%, Public 75.7%

Oregon

In the [map](#) from the University of Montana's Research & Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities, you can see the disability rates by [county in Oregon](#).



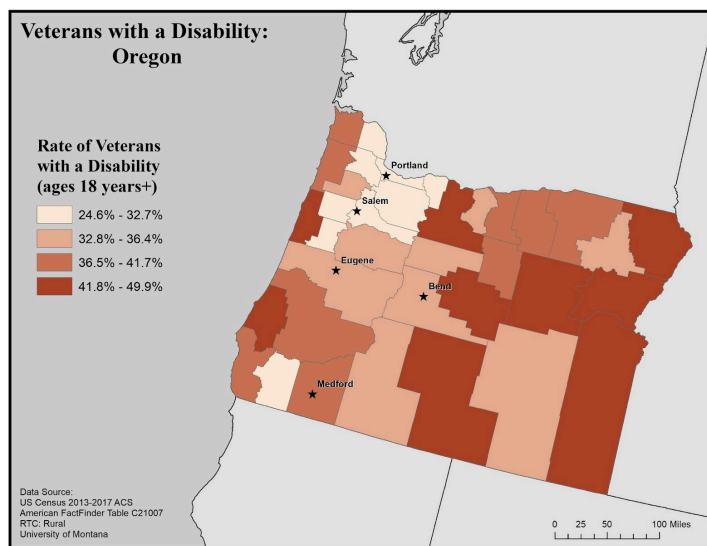
The five largest cities (Portland, Salem, Eugene, Bend, and Medford) are labeled on the map to show if there are any differences between disability rates in urban vs rural areas. The map shows quite a bit of variation in disability rates across the state. The highest rates, of 21.3 to 23.4%, occur in rural counties in

the central, southern, and coastal regions of the state. The lowest rates, of 9.9 to 14.8%, tend to occur in more urban areas like the counties

containing three of the five most populous cities (Portland, Salem, and Bend).

In the upper corner of the map is an inset map of the United States showing how overall general disability rates in Oregon compare to the rest of the United States. **Overall**, general disability rates in Oregon are 12.8 to 14.6%, which is the second-highest category.

Military Veterans



For our [veterans](#), the rates of disability are even higher by county as this [map](#) of Oregon shows.

[The state profile on Oregon](#) from the [University of Montana's Research & Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities](#) is full of

other stats and maps that should be helpful to any campaign. They have state profiles in all 50 states and Puerto Rico and a plethora of other info.

Oregon voters with disabilities and other marginalized communities would be disproportionately harmed by the proposed bill to repeal Oregon's standard vote-by-mail system (SB 210).

This order comes at a time when Congress is actively considering similar voter suppression laws, such as the [SAVE Act](#). If passed, the SAVE Act would require people to provide documented proof of citizenship in person when registering to vote and updating their voter registration, such as after a move. The SAVE Act would also make it harder for women who changed their last name after marriage.

Millions of voters do not have access to documents that would sufficiently meet the requirements that qualify as “documentary proof of citizenship,” such as U.S. passports. People with disabilities, older adults, and people of color may be especially unlikely to have access to these documents. The requirement of needing to go in person would make voter registration difficult or impossible for many disabled voters who do not have access to accessible transportation, are living in congregate settings, are immunocompromised and cannot go into many public spaces, or for whom the election office may not be accessible. Additionally, the in-person requirement would make it extremely difficult for individual organizers, coalitions, and organizations to host successful voter registration drives. This would lead to communities already excluded by get-out-the-vote efforts being further neglected. People with disabilities are more likely to vote by mail than non-disabled voters, and because of this, more disabled voters would be at risk of having their vote not counted than non-disabled voters.

I strongly encourage a NO VOTE on SB 210.

Sincerely,

Tina Argetsinger

Portland, Oregon