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Media Contacts:

Indiana Disability Rights: Kristin Dulaney, 317-419-7595, kdulaney@indianadisabilityrights.org
Disability Rights Advocates: Chris Maccarone, 510-529-3453, cmaccarone@dralegal.org

FEDERAL JUDGE’S RULING IMPROVES ABSENTEE BALLOT ACCESS FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE GENERAL ELECTION

September 27, 2022—Indianapolis, IN— In advance of the approaching midterm election, the Honorable Jane Magnus-Stinson ordered increased access by granting voters with print disabilities the freedom to select the person of their choice to assist in marking their paper absentee ballot. A “voter with print disabilities” is a voter who cannot independently mark a paper ballot or ballot card due to blindness, low vision, or a physical disability that limits manual dexterity. In short, a voter with a print disability cannot physically mark their ballot without assistance.

Eligible voters who want to exercise this new option should apply for an absentee ballot. The application can be accessed by logging into [Voter Portal](#) and clicking, “Voter With Print Disabilities.” Alternatively, voters with a print disability can [complete and submit a PDF version of the form](#). Absentee voting – commonly known as early voting – begins October 12. Election Day is November 8.

"Many members of the American Council of the Blind of Indiana have had negative experiences from being required to rely on traveling boards to vote during the COVID pandemic and before," said Dee Ann Hart, a member of the Board of Directors of the ACB-I and its Advocacy and Awareness Committee Chair. "Voting is our civil right, and central to that is the ability to vote privately and independently. I am pleased that this court has expanded voters' options for November 2022 by making the traveling board no longer mandatory. Ultimately, what Indiana voters need is an accessible electronic voting mechanism that they can use without needing to rely on any assistance."

According to the *Election Law Journal's* recently published "[Cost of Voting in the American States: 2022](#)," Indiana ranks in the bottom half of states for cost to voters of time and effort to maintain registration and cast a ballot, coming in at number 36. Judge Magnus-Stinson’s ruling strikes down Indiana’s rule that absentee voters with print disabilities may only vote absentee by scheduling an appointment with a “traveling board” in the general election. The traveling board rule was the most restrictive in the country for voters with disabilities and prohibited at least one voter from casting a ballot in the 2020 election.

"I am glad that this order recognizes what we’ve been saying since we filed this case: that Indiana’s absentee voting system discriminates against blind people and voters with print disabilities like me," said Wanda Tackett, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit. "It is my sincere hope that this order will push the state to respect my rights, and the rights of those like me, to have a fully accessible absentee voting experience."

Plaintiffs are seeking only injunctive relief, not monetary damages, and are represented by attorneys from Indiana Disability Rights and Disability Rights Advocates. [Click here to read the court's order.](#)

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Indiana Disability Rights (IDR) is the designated Protection and Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program for the State of Indiana. IDR's mission is to uphold, promote, and advance the rights of individuals with disabilities through empowerment and advocacy to achieve a more equitable society. For more information, visit www.IndianaDisabilityRights.org.

Disability Rights Advocates is a leading national nonprofit disability rights legal center. Its mission is to advance equal rights and opportunity for people with all types of disabilities nationwide. DRA has a long history of enforcing the rights of voters with disabilities, including their rights to accessible voting machines, polling places, and online voter registration. Visit www.dralegal.org.