

## **Transcript for Vote for Access- Episode 2: Information**

IMANI: Information: it's everywhere. Dispersing through the invisible Wi-Fi signals, pinging through our modern world like Spiderman's webs through New York. We now have more access to information than ever before. But for many people with disabilities, information can be inaccessible. This gap can prevent folks from making an informed decision on which candidate to vote for. My name is Imani Barbarin, I'm a disabled voter, and this is Vote for Access. Voting isn't a one-day event. It's one part of an ongoing process where you first learn about the issues and candidates, then decide who or what you want to vote for and watch as the results come in. You can't learn about the issues and candidates without access to information. Whether someone prefers to scroll through an online article or attend a community forum, everyone has the right to accessible information. The internet has gone through a lot of changes. We went from-

COMPUTER: You've got mail.

IMANI: To "This is Fine." memes.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Comic of a dog surrounded by flames saying, "This is fine," with a smile.

IMANI: But accessibility on the internet is lagging behind.

SASHA: My name is Sasha Rangel. I currently live in Austin, Texas. There has just been a big problem with the access of information as it stands. The information has been available on a website, but it has been designed in a way that's rather tedious to navigate with a screen reader-only software that I currently use to navigate everything on a computer.

IMANI: Small font, formatting that is unreadable by screen readers, flashing graphics, and videos without audio descriptions or captions make the internet inaccessible. It can feel like the Wild West, but with way less gold. There's no gold in these data mines. We don't often hear of informational inaccessibility until something goes wrong, like when it was reported in July 2019 that not a single candidate's website was accessible according to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Let's hear from Bill from Florida.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Bill wearing dark glasses.

BILL: What we did was we analyzed each candidate's website against the worldwide standards in accessibility. We had a few of the candidates reach out to us, and they contacted us and they were like, "Well, wow, you know, we took a peek at this meter report, and we know we have a lot to do on our websites. What do we actually need to do?"

IMANI: The fact that accessibility isn't considered first is a problem. The fact that it often isn't considered at all is unacceptable. Let's talk with Delynn from Arizona.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Delynn signs while a voice actor speaks.

VOICE ACTOR: Many videos from the candidates don't have closed captions. It's just a person speaking about what they wanna tell you, you know, a little snippet. There's no closed captioning, no sign language, there's nothing to make that accessible. Maybe you could have a bubble on the screen and have the interpreter signing for these campaigns and these ads so a Deaf person would have the same equal access as a hearing person. Quite frankly, as a Deaf individual, I think it's the law.

IMANI: Without thinking through accessibility, you are leaving voters out. It's basically "The Bachelorette." You have a bunch of candidates to decide between, but you're not allowed to find out information on any of them because an access issue is interrupting to just steal you for a minute. And it's not just access to candidates but input into what the candidates focus on. The lives of people with disabilities are intimately affected by legislative changes. If the policies candidates are proposing directly affect your life, wouldn't you want a say? Let's talk with Madeline from Pennsylvania.

MADELINE: I want to be engaged, I want to advocate for change. I want to be involved in the political sphere and advocate for myself so that things do improve. The stated policy is not good for people with disabilities. There's a lot of discrimination, and we really need to advocate for better and improved laws and keep fighting for them. It's still very difficult for us to get any information about new policies that are coming up, policies that are going to be voted on. It's very difficult to find any of that information in an accessible place.

IMANI: Voting is about participating in democracy and making an informed choice. In order to make an informed choice, you have to have access to

information. Don't know how to make your digital content accessible? Ironically, there's a lot of accessible information about how to do this on the internet. For specific information about the rights in your state and for advocacy resources, reach out to your state's Protection and Advocacy agency. Each state has a Protection and Advocacy Agency that exists to protect the rights of people with disabilities. And keep watching this series at [VoteForAccess.us](http://VoteForAccess.us).

VOICE ACTOR: This is Vote for Access.