

# Advisory committee making progress on Monroe County voting center sites

Team has identified about 15 sites that meet accessibility standards, other requirements

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Monroe County is off to a good start toward becoming a vote center county, said [Help](#) America Vote Act Outreach manager Jeremy Burton, who works in the Indiana Secretary of State's Office.

Burton was invited to address the county Vote Center Advisory Committee Tuesday on the topic of accessibility.

The committee is on a tight schedule to produce a list of more than 20 sites that could serve as polling places throughout the county, replacing precincts, for the Nov. 8 elections.

Burton distributed a handout on the topic to committee members and members of the public that listed polling place accessibility requirements, detailing [parking](#) specifications, ramps and elevators, walkways or pathways into polling sites, interior requirements and other features to ensure compliance with the Help America Vote Act and the American Disabilities Act.

In addition to the physical characteristics of polling places, Burton said, poll worker training is critical to ensuring that all voters, including those with disabilities, have full and equal access to voting.

He said grant monies are available to help polling sites address accessibility issues.

## Vote center successes

Burton said vote centers were deemed successful in the three Indiana counties that served as vote center pilots: Tippecanoe, Cass and Wayne.

"Overwhelmingly, voters love vote centers," he said, acknowledging that he wasn't invited to Monroe County for the purpose of endorsing vote centers.

Voter participation increased in all three counties when they switched to voting centers, Burton said, but he wasn't certain whether the increase was attributable to improvements in [convenience](#) or contentious elections.

He said an unanticipated outcome of moving from precincts to voting centers is that overall accessibility is improved.

Vote centers require [Internet access](#), which means sites chosen often are newer than long-established precinct polling sites and constructed in compliance with federal accessibility requirements.

"Fewer places to vote means you can be more picky," he said. "You can choose the best of the best."

## Election concerns

New Monroe County Republican Party chairwoman Nancy Ganka said she's worried that since the Nov. 8 elections only involve races and voters in Bloomington, Ellettsville and Stinesville, vote center locations will be chosen primarily with Bloomington residents in mind.

The vote centers being selected now are intended to serve not just for the Nov. 8 elections, but also for future countywide elections.

Vote Center Advisory Committee member Jack Davis said his inspection team has identified about 15 sites so far that comply with HAVA guidelines and other requirements for voting centers, and most of those are outside of Bloomington city limits. He said the team is inspecting four or five potential sites every day and will soon focus on sites closer to downtown.

Ganka said, given the short timeframe — elections are less than four months away — there won't be time to adequately warn voters about the change in polling locations.

By law, when a county switches from precincts to vote centers, every registered voter in the county must receive a postcard notifying them of the change and listing all county vote centers.

"Time isn't on our side," Davis acknowledged, "But we're picking up the game, and encouraged as to how it's going. We're off and running."

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More online

The handout on accessibility requirements for polling places distributed at the meeting can be found at:

[www.in.gov/sos/elections/files/Polling\\_Place\\_Accessibility\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/files/Polling_Place_Accessibility_Brochure.pdf)

For more on Indiana vote centers:

Votecenters.in.gov