

To: Board of Education – Common Council Liaison Committee
Date: April 18, 2006

Please rectify a serious impediment to accessibility at schools that are used as polling places. Most schools have excellent parking for people with disabilities. However, the entrances to the driveways to these parking spots are marked with large “DO NOT ENTER” signs. Presumably this is to discourage routine student drop-offs. However, these signs also prevent voters with disabilities from finding the accessible spaces.

This situation exists at Leopold, Crestwood, Van Hise, and Muir schools. Thoreau, Midvale, Stephens, and Jefferson have similar situations, but with smaller signs indicating that parking is for authorized vehicles only. There may be other schools with this same problem.

In my opinion, these situations render those polling places inaccessible, in violation of federal law. This puts at risk Madison’s ability to be reimbursed for the new machines (\$5,000 each) that are mandated to be in place for the September election at each polling place to assist voters with disabilities. Please arrange a method to change this situation. Consider placement of temporary highly visible signs at the driveway entrance, reading “Vote Here Today. Parking for Voters with Disabilities.”

Here is another suggestion to improve election day: schedule a staff development day (no school for students) for the November gubernatorial and presidential election days, when there is a very high voter turnout. This would make it easier to find an appropriate room for the polls. Previously, schools have placed equipment and voters in hallways where there is heavy student traffic; or used classrooms, which disrupt classes.

An additional advantage to this schedule proposal is that it will eliminate the extra election-day security concerns for students generated by the many people entering the school to vote. An additional safety concern is the increased vehicular traffic around the school.

Please inform me of progress towards implementing these proposals.

Paul Malischke
4825 Bayfield Terrace
Madison WI 53705
malischke@yahoo.com
238-8976

cc: Enis Ragland, Mayor’s Office
Madison Commission on People with Disabilities
Alicia Sidman, Disability Rights Wisconsin