Washington State Voter Information Portal
Providing Accessible and Usable Information

Washington regularly convenes a Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) which is made up of accessibility advocates, county election staff, voters with disabilities, and Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) staff. This group of individuals discuss best practices, coordinate events, and advise us on how we can improve accessibility for elections and voting in Washington State.

During a meeting in December of 2015, the Disability Advisory Committee expressed interest in improving our voter information portal, MyVote, and to do additional outreach so that voters with disabilities would know of this valuable resource. Specifically, DAC recommended using accessibility best practices, WCAG 2.0 AA standards, National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Mobile Voting Working Group Electronic Ballot Delivery Guidelines, Center for Civic Design guidelines, and many other resources to ensure that we designed MyVote to be accessible and easy to use for voters with disabilities.

Priority is Accessibility

We decided that to achieve the best usability and accessibility, a full redesign would be the best approach. We consulted with our in-house graphics designer while always keeping accessibility as one of our top priorities. After four months of design and development we had a testable solution.

Independently Tested

We had MyVote's new design independently tested against WCAG 2.0 AA standards using 14 different combinations of internet browsers and screen readers. Additionally, we wanted to secure a vendor that could continually test and verify accessibility any time a change is made to the application, which can happen multiple times per year. Also, as technology changes, this vendor helps us ensure our application continues to work with assistive technology even if our application has had no changes.

Real World User Experience

One of our concerns was that meeting WCAG 2.0 AA doesn't really measure the user's experience. It only measures that we met a technical requirement. We've worked with people who use assistive technology at our Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) and reached out to the NFB to get feedback from people who regularly use assistive technology. This real world feedback helps us create a solution that meets technical standards and is a positive experience for the voter using assistive technology.

Usage during 2016

Following the deployment, MyVote had nearly 2 million views and supported a record number of online voter registrations submitted (27,601) on a single day in Washington. However, most importantly the accessibility community raved about it and there were no reported accessibility issues.

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