



May 8, 2019

Dear House Elections Committee Member:

We the undersigned members and supporters of REV UP Texas collectively and strongly urge you to oppose SB 9. SB 9, by creating new requirements for individuals providing assistance to voters with disabilities with potential criminal penalties, would have a chilling effect on the number of people willing to assist Texas voters with disabilities and increase barriers for voters with disabilities.

The mission of REV UP Texas is to outreach, educate, and disseminate information to people with disabilities, family members, supporters, professionals, the general public, and policymakers on issues affecting the integration of people with disabilities of all ages into every aspect of community living. Therefore, REV UP Texas and the disability community have major concerns about the provisions and unintended consequences of SB 9, including the following:

SB 9 would remove a person with disability's right to cast a private ballot. Voters with disabilities have the right to use anyone they choose (except an employer or union representative) as an assistant at the polls. SB 9 would allow poll watchers to observe and watch the voting process and then check a person's ballot, but only if assisted by a non-family member. This same requirement does not exist for people without disabilities. This will de-incentivize voters exercising their right to use anyone they choose as an assistant.

SB 9 would discourage individuals and groups to provide voters with disabilities rides to the polls. SB 9 would require any person who provides a ride to the polls to at least three non-family members to complete and sign a form that requires the person to affirm that the voters are physically unable to enter the polling place without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring their health. This proposal does not exist for people without disabilities. Forcing individuals to fill out a legal form, stating the physical inability of an individual is a lot of pressure on a person and can be intimidating, which would discourage many groups or individuals from offering assistance in the future.

SB 9 would also discourage individuals to provide assistance to voters with disabilities. Currently, when assisting a voter, a person must complete a legally binding oath affirming that the assister will not suggest how the voter should vote and agreeing to prepare the voters ballot as the voter directs.



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SB 9 requires anyone who assists a voter with a disability to complete a new, invasive form that requires the assister to provide information on the voter's disability, which would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, requiring an assister to swear to information about another voter's disability will discourage people for assisting voters with disabilities.

Finally, SB9 increases penalties for voters or those that assist them who make mistakes and could result in individuals being convicted of a felony offense for merely making mistakes on forms.

We believe SB 9 would make voting harder for Texans with disabilities and those that support them. Therefore, we urge you to reject this proposed legislation and focus instead on providing more access and support for Texas voters with and without disabilities.

Sincerely,