

## Polling place survey will help everyone vote

To the Editor:

Re: "Making HAVA Work" (editorial, Oct. 19): As the authors from the board of elections acknowledge, The Help America Vote Act requires all polling systems to be accessible to people with disabilities, and it provides federal funding for that purpose.

We appreciate the county board of elections' interest in bringing to Onondaga County voting machines that are accessible. But there are flaws to these machines, as well as other barriers to voting for people with disabilities, which the authors overlook.

The Full Face Ballot (FFB) requires all candidates to be displayed on one large page. In order to fit in all the names, the print is small and the audio is poor, particularly on the Sequoia Voting system, which was featured in the photograph accompanying the editorial.

The FFB machines do not accommodate people with both low vision and hearing loss. Further, they do not take into consideration voters with short arms or people who are unable to extend their arms to touch the screen.

The ATM-style machines, on the other hand, which resemble laptop computers, are more accessible and display ballots on multiple pages with the option of enlarging the font.

They are also several thousand dollars cheaper than the FFB machines.

The county's unwillingness to purchase the more economical and much-preferred ATM-style machines remains an issue of great concern.

Lack of accessible voting machines is not the only barrier which voters with disabilities in Onondaga County face on Election Day. Many polling places are completely inaccessible to people with disabilities.

Voting is a fundamental right of all American citizens.

Approximately one in five people in Onondaga County has a disability. Yet, as a result of inaccessible voting machines and polling places, many voters are denied their constitutionally protected right to vote.

On Election Day, Nov. 8, Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy, Law and Disability Studies, the Public Interest Law Firm, a law school clinic affiliated with the Center, in collaboration with ARISE, a center for independent living, will release preliminary findings of a survey of polling places in Onondaga County.

The goal of the survey is to identify non-accessible polling sites, and to provide a listing of these sites to the county board of elections so that it may take the necessary action to ensure that all polling places in Onondaga County become accessible to voters with disabilities, as required by law.

**Arlene Kanter and Steven Taylor**  
co-directors

**Rebecca Russo**, legal program coordinator, Center for Human Policy, Law and Disability Studies, Syracuse University