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**Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos, Advocates, and Local Election Officials
Discuss and Demonstrate Vermont's New Accessible Voting System**

Montpelier, VT – On Tuesday, October 30th at 1pm Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos held a press conference to discuss Vermont's new Accessible Voting System at the Secretary of State's office, located at 128 State Street in Montpelier. Secretary Condos was joined by Disability Rights Vermont (DRVT) Supervising Attorney AJ Ruben, Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) Executive Director Sarah Launderville and Barre City Clerk Carol Dawes.

The press conference included a demonstration of the Accessible Voting System by Kumeye Castillo.

"Every eligible Vermont voter has the right to vote and cast their ballot privately and independently, either early or at the polls on Election Day" said Secretary Condos. "Few voters with disabilities utilized the accessible voting devices previously available at the polls, and because of the setup of those devices, assistance was often required, compromising that voter's ability to vote privately and independently. Our new Accessible Voting System is a big step forward in accessibility and security for all voters, including Vermont voters with a disability."

The Accessible Voting System is a tablet-based ballot marking system, and allows voters to make and review their selections with a variety of accessibility devices. Once the voter confirms their selections, a printer marks the same ballot used by all voters with those selections and the ballot is fed through a tabulator or placed in a ballot box for hand counting like every other vote cast.

"Since the first time I voted in 2016, I have never been able to do so without assistance," said Kumeye Castillo, who helped demonstrate the new system. "I am very excited for the opportunity to be able to vote independently, and hope that the system will increase voter participation among individuals with disabilities."

Sarah Launderville, Executive Director of VCIL spoke at the event, saying "people with disabilities had been left behind in casting a private vote; now that has changed, and we will have true equity in the voting process, allowing people with disabilities the same choice as non-disabled Vermonters. This is a celebration of inclusion!"

"As a Clerk I'm on the front lines on Election Day, interacting with and serving the voters," said Barre City Clerk Carol Dawes, who assisted in the development and beta testing of the Accessible Voting System. "The new system is both easy for election staff to set up and easy for voters to use, and allows all voters to have the same election experience when casting their ballots."

AJ Ruben, Supervising Attorney for DRVT spoke on behalf of the organization, who worked with the Secretary of State's office and other stakeholders to design and develop the new system. He also discussed a [recent statewide polling place accessibility survey and report](#).

"DRVT has surveyed polling places in a great number of communities around the state. What we found is not perfection, but communities making efforts to insure that elections are open to all," said DRVT Executive Director Ed Paquin, Jr. "Early voting options, physical access, availability of assistance, and options at the polls all combine to make it possible for people with any disability in any community to be part of making community decisions."

Vermont's new Accessible Voting System has been in operation statewide since August.

The event was streamed via Facebook Live through the Secretary of State's official Facebook page, and archived footage of the event can be found at www.facebook.com/SecretaryOfStateJimCondos.

"I'm proud of the work our office has done in partnership with advocates and stakeholders to make this important system an option for Vermonters," concluded Secretary Condos. "But we know there's still work to do. We will keep working with stakeholders and local election officials to increase accessibility, making it easy for eligible Vermont voters to exercise their right to vote."

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