

Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations

Vermont State House

115 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Support for S.297 – Mobile Voting Opt-In Legislation

Dear Members of the Legislature,

My name is Lou Ann Blake, and I write in support of legislation that would allow cities to opt in to providing secure mobile voting in municipal elections.

I was a resident of Maryland for 48 years and worked for the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore for 19 years and was serving as Director of Research Programs there when I moved to Honolulu, Hawaii with my husband in 2024 for his job. I am nationally recognized expert in accessible vote-by-mail systems having previously served as an expert witness or fact witness on eight accessible vote-by-mail cases. Currently, I am serving as an expert witness in four accessible vote-by-mail cases, including one in Ontario, Canada. As a blind voter, I have personally used online ballot marking tools and remote accessible vote-by-mail (RAVBM) systems. For both the 2024 primary and general elections in Hawaii, I used the Enhanced Voting System RAVBM to privately and independently mark and return my ballot using my iPhone. Through both my professional work and personal experience, I have seen how thoughtful technology can expand access while preserving election integrity.

For many voters who are blind or have other print disabilities, privacy in voting remains an unmet promise. Although federal law affirms the right of every voter to cast a secret ballot, many voters with print disabilities are still forced to rely on another person—often a family member, poll worker, or caregiver—to read and mark their ballot. This dependence compromises both privacy and independence and can undermine confidence in the integrity of the vote.

No voter should have to disclose their political choices simply to participate in democracy.

Mobile voting technology offers a meaningful solution. When implemented with appropriate security and accessibility safeguards, mobile ballot marking systems allow voters with print disabilities to independently review and mark their ballots using their own assistive technology, including screen readers and refreshable braille displays. This restores what every voter deserves: the ability to vote privately, without coercion, assistance, or loss of confidentiality.

Secure mobile voting, offered as an additional option, would help ensure that voters with print disabilities can fully exercise their rights alongside their neighbors and peers. It does not replace traditional methods, but expands access for those who have long been underserved.

I strongly support careful, transparent implementation of mobile voting systems that prioritize both security and accessibility. These values are not in conflict. With thoughtful policymaking, rigorous standards, and proper oversight, privacy and security can—and must—coexist.

Legislation that allows cities to offer mobile voting affirms a simple but powerful principle: no voter should have to sacrifice privacy in order to exercise the fundamental right to vote.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and help advance an election system that is inclusive, secure, and worthy of public trust. I welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to ensure that accessibility and integrity remain central to our democratic process.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to equal access for all voters.

Sincerely,

Lou Ann Blake

Accessible Voting Consultant

Former Director of Research Programs, National Federation of the Blind