VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

State and Local Actions and Federal Resources to Address Accessibility of Early Voting

What GAO Found

Selected states and localities have taken steps to make voting information available and accessible, but voters with disabilities may encounter challenges with both. States and some localities have provided information about accessible voting options on their websites, but advocacy officials reported challenges, such as one state not providing information about the accessibility features of its voting equipment. States have also taken steps to make websites accessible, such as ensuring compatibility with screen readers used by people with visual disabilities. However, election and advocacy officials reported, among other things, that some website content such as digital materials, lacks accessibility features and some content is not written in plain language.

Federal agencies have assisted state and local election officials in their efforts to ensure accessible voting. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has provided guidance and educational resources on voting accessibility, such as a checklist for assessing polling places, which some selected states and localities have found useful. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC)—a national clearinghouse of information about election administration—has also provided resources on topics such as accessible voting equipment and partnering with disability advocates. However, selected states and localities GAO contacted reported mixed feedback on the usefulness of EAC resources. Although the EAC communicates regularly with election officials, it does not have a mechanism for collecting and using feedback from these officials about the usefulness of its existing accessibility resources or additional resource needs. Implementing such a mechanism would better position the EAC to meet election officials’ needs.