>> Rostom: Hello everybody. Welcome to our webinar today. Unfortunately, we're having some issues with our captioner and our Communications team is working in the background to settle those issues. My name is Rostom Dadian, the Policy Associate at RespectAbility. Today we're going to be talking about registering to vote and getting involved in political campaigns I am a light-skinned Middle Eastern man with curly brown hair wearing a teal shirt. I'm going to pass it along to our participants to introduce themselves and I'll start with Stacy. Go ahead Stacy.

>> Stacy: Hi everyone, my name is Stacy Cervenka. I'm the Senior Director of Policy here at RespectAbility, and I work with Congressional offices, federal agencies, state agencies, and state legislatures to improve laws and regulations that make life more equitable for people with disabilities. And I am a middle-aged light-skinned white woman. My pronouns are she and her.

>> Rostom: Alexia, would you go ahead and introduce yourself, please?

>> Alexia: Hello everyone, my name is Alexia Kemerling. My pronouns are she/her. For a visual description, I am a young white woman with shoulder length wavy blonde hair, clear glasses. I'm wearing a black sweater, and a small gold necklace that says vote. And I am the REV UP coordinator. REV UP is a program from the American Association of People with Disabilities. It stands for register, educate, vote, use your power. And its mission is to build civic engagement in the disability community and improve election accessibility, so I'm super excited to be here.

>> Rostom: Thank you Alexia. Liz, would you go ahead and introduce yourself, please?

>> Liz: Yes, and thank you for having me. My name is Liz Weintraub. I'm the Senior Advocacy Specialist at AUCD. And for those of you who don't know what AUCD is, we represent three different network, doing a lot of advocacy work and research and learning and -- educating future -- people -- the future advocacy -- advocates in the-- in this field. And for visual -- and I also -- I personally -- that's about what AUCD is, but I personally am on their policy team, as well as I'm -- as well as I'm the host of Tuesdays with Liz, where I attempt to make policy in accessible ways. And for a visual description, I'm a short white woman with black curly hair, and I'm wearing a red and black turtleneck, and I have white rim glasses, so thanks.

>> Rostom: Thank you Liz. So to start off I have a general question. So what are the most common barriers that voters with disability face when registering to vote? And Alexia, I'll throw it to you first.

>> Alexia: This is Alexia. Yeah, so this is a great question. So I think that when it comes to barriers in registering to vote, it really depends on what state you live in. Some states more frequently use automatic voter registration, and some states require you to go in and register to vote, either online or by sending in a mail application. So I think it really, first of all, depends on where you live. But I think in general, people with disabilities might experience barriers registering to vote simply by prejudice or ableist stereotypes that they might encounter from friends, family, election workers even. If you have a guardian, that can impact your right to vote in some states. And in some states it can just be kind of confusing whether or not having a guardian impacts your right to vote, so that might be a barrier is just determining whether or not you are eligible. And then I think also just when it comes to registering, understanding what your options are for voting, and what might be accessible to you and available to you based on the state that you live in. And sometimes that information can be really difficult to find. It can be hard to understand. A lot of times the information about registering to vote is not in plain language, and the County website itself might not even be accessible to people who use screen readers or other assistive technology -- even though it's required by law to be accessible, we know that in many cases it's not. So finding that information and being able to understand it and access it can also be a barrier for people.

>> Rostom: Excellent, thank you Alexia. Stacy, I'll throw it to you too. What are the most common barriers that people with disability face when registering to vote?

>> Stacy: People with disabilities can face barriers at all stages of registering to vote. As Alexia mentioned, first of all, getting access to the information about how to register to vote can be challenging. That might be because the website, which is required to be accessible, might not be screen reader accessible. So if a blind or low vision person goes looking for how to register to vote, they may have difficulty finding that. As she mentioned, people with intellectual disabilities, cognitive disabilities, people who are non-native English speakers might face challenges based on how it's described on the website. There's also the challenge that people have difficulty accessing transportation in many parts of the United States. So if you are someone who can't drive because you're blind, you're low vision, you have epilepsy, you have a cognitive or intellectual disability, you may have difficulty getting some of the required documents to register to vote. And in more and more states that's including an ID. So in order to even register to vote, you might have to undertake several steps before you even begin to do that. And so that might involve finding transportation to -- a place where you can get an acceptable ID like the DMV -- whether that's taking off work, whether that's securing the transportation. So some states are putting laws in place that that just make it -- make extra steps for registering to vote, and that always adds challenges for people with disabilities. And -- again, there's -- people with disabilities may -- not be encouraged to vote, whether that's by family, or friends, or society in general. If somebody lives in a congregate living setting -- is the election being talked about? Are -- people who live there being encouraged to register to vote? Some states actually have laws in place that state that if a person with a disability applies for a program for people with disabilities, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, certain types of State economic assistance, that they be automatically offered the opportunity to register to vote. I know that's the case in California. So if you apply for VR services, when you apply, your counselor should offer you the opportunity to register to vote. So those are some that I can think of as far as registering.

>> Rostom: Thank you Stacy. Liz, the same question for you. What are the most common barriers that people with disabilities face when registering to vote?

>> Liz: I think both Alexis and Stacy have talked about the barriers that I have encountered, and I have heard of. I just would like to stress about the people with intellectual disabilities -- people often say, well -- why would you care? What do you know about these issues? Well, people do need to be educated, and that's an issue that we need to address, and to put it in plain language. And I think Alexis talked about that. When you talk about -- an issue that isn't in plain language, that doesn't help me or my friends. I don't understand what you're talking about, and -- so how can I be an educated voter? [crosstalk]

>> Stacy: I was gonna say, I think Liz makes a really good point that a lot of people with disabilities are -- there is that thought, that how could you possibly understand these complicated issues? How could you -- politics is so complicated, policy is so complicated, how could you understand that? And I think what's important to understand is that, as a marginalized population, laws and policies impact people with disabilities even more often than they impact other people, because it's often our rights that are on the table. It's the programs that we depend on. It's our -- is the government going to fund Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid -- education of students with disabilities, vocational rehabilitation, housing, paratransit programs? So even though people might think how can you understand these issues -- you have a disability? The fact is that it's often our rights and our programs that are on the chopping block. So we are often as interested or more interested than anybody else.

>> Liz: And if I can add to your point, Stacy, and I know Rostom wants to go the next question, we're one of the largest voting blocks -- in the country. I think there's 64 million people with disability in the country where -- and while the disability club is growing every day with long COVID and other kind of illnesses. And so we need to be the ones -- who can vote, and we're not.

>> Rostom: Absolutely. All that being said, Liz, how do you think voter registration could be more accessible to people with disabilities?

>> Liz: Well I think that's a great question. I think plain language is the number one thing. I think asking me -- finding a ride to the voting place. I live about three or four blocks from my voting place. That might not sound like a really far walk for me, but it is. It's hard for me to walk. And for people who use a wheelchair, it's really -- it's sometime very impossible to do that. I think putting things simpler, using things in accessible -- in alternative formats like Braille or using screen readers, it would be really nice for that. And so I think -- just -- and also I think that it's really hard -- it would be really nice if people would just -- would ask me what I needed, rather than saying "you need this." I'm the best person to ask.

>> Rostom: That's an amazing point Liz. I think a lot of the time, the lived experience of people with disabilities are devalued, when the people making decisions aren't aware and don't involve our voices. Alexia, I have the same question for you. How can the voter registration process be more accessible for people with disabilities?

>> Alexia: Yeah I think -- one thing that Stacy touched on that we're seeing rise in many states is requirements to have a photo ID to register to vote and to vote. And I think that's a very restrictive policy. It can be difficult and expensive to get an ID, and if you are not a driver, as many people in the disability community are not, it's probably even less likely that you have an up-to-date photo ID. And so I think requiring IDs is a restrictive process that isn't needed for voter registration. And kind of along with that, sometimes states will require signature match processes to verify your voter registration when you go to check in at the polling place, or if you are required to sign your absentee ballot envelope, they will try to verify that your signature is the same as your ID. But for many disabled people, it isn't possible to produce the same signature twice. And so that puts a lot of people's votes at risk. So that's kind of a piece that starts in the registration process, but is prevalent throughout the whole voting process. And then, I think I would also just say making online voter registration available and accessible in every state is another good accessibility process.

>> Rostom: Excellent. Stacy, same question to you. How can the voter registration process become more accessible for people with disabilities?

>> Stacy: I think part of it is just following current Federal law, and making sure that your website that explains how to register to vote is accessible to people who use adaptive technology. I think offering people the ability to register to vote online, which many states do, and make sure that that website is accessible, again, to people who use assistive technology, that's really helpful. Being able to register to vote online is an extremely -- I mean, I think it's extremely helpful to everyone. As Alexia said -- sometimes requiring those additional steps, while burdensome to everyone, they tend to be the most burdensome to people in -- more marginalized communities. And generally, they're really not needed. I mean -- I remember when I first began voting in Minnesota, you could register to vote same day. You had to have, like, two pieces of mail or something, and it was -- very user friendly. So I would love to see more States -- more States used to have same day voter registration where you just showed up with -- there was a variety of different types of ID you could show up with, including, like, a utility bill. So I'd love to see more states go back to that, or states that haven't had that in the past go to that. As Liz mentioned, making sure materials are produced in alternate formats, whether that's large print, whether that's Braille, electronically. Make sure things are in plain language -- make sure things are in the language of -- voters in that community, whether that's Spanish or -- Arabic or whatever the situation is. So -- I think that as far as registering, I think just streamlining the process and making it simpler is always better.

>> Rostom: Excellent, thank you. So registering to vote and voting is one aspect of the civic engagement process. Stacy, what are the different levels of involvement people can get involved with in campaigns?

>> Stacy: Sure. Well, if you're interested in getting involved with a campaign, there are many different ways that you can do that, and there are many different jobs that you can volunteer for on a campaign. At -- if you're just beginning this, you might reach out to a campaign about volunteering. Often you can go to the candidate's website, there's usually a volunteer form that you can fill out and you can check the things that you're interested in doing. And those things might include door knocking, so knocking on doors in your community, and saying, hey, I'd like to talk to you about -- Stacy Cervenka who's running for congress or whatever -- and -- there's block captaining in many areas, meaning that you are kind of sort of in charge of voter registration efforts and getting out the vote, like, on your block or in a certain neighborhood, so there's block captaining. There's phone banking, where you call people, you ask them, hey, have you -- decided who you're going to vote for? I'd like to talk with you about -- candidate Liz Weintraub, she's running for school board, I want to talk to you about her positions. So there's phone banking.There's text banking now, which basically means you text -- you have lists and you text people, and you say hi -- many of you have probably already received them and -- they might say, "hi Alexia, this is Stacy from Liz Weintraub's campaign. I just wanted to talk -- Liz Weintraub believes in increasing funding for students with disabilities in public schools. Can we count on your vote?" So there's -- at the beginning level, there's a lot of ways that you can get involved. The door knocking, text banking, phone banking, block captaining -- maybe handing out water bottles with the candidate's name, or buttons with the candidate's name, or mouse pads with the candidate name at community events, staffing tables. And then if you're interested in public policy, there are often opportunities at kind of a more national level in the campaign. I've had two presidential campaigns where I've served on the disability advisory committee for the national -- sort of headquarters of the campaign. And in that capacity, you help advise the campaign on how to reach out to the disability community, like, ways to involve the disability community, ways to be accessible to the disability community, ways to be welcoming. And also advising them on their disability policy. So we crafted -- we crafted documents on -- what -- if this person wins the presidency, what should they do their first day in office? What should they do their first month? What should they do the first 90 days? We had subcommittees on -- housing, transportation, employment, and those subcommittees came up with -- very detailed -- if this person wins office, here's what they're going to do on their first day, or here's what they're going to do -- in their first four years in office. So if you're interested in public policy, getting involved in the campaign on a national level can also be possible. And generally at that point, you probably already know people who are working in that space -- and you probably already know someone who's, like, working on the campaign and often it's just reaching out to them or reaching out to the campaign in general -- but at that level generally you're working -- working in the public policy space, and -- but that's also another opportunity that a lot -- of people have.

>> Rostom: Excellent. So Stacy, we rarely see staffers or candidates with visual disabilities. How can we be more inclusive to people with disabilities in the candidate process?

>> Stacy: I think first -- making sure that the people who are recruiting don't have any unconscious bias against people are blind and low vision. So if you are somebody who is out on the street who is collecting signatures for a position or for a petition, often you might just let someone who's blind or low vision walk by, and not even ask them if they're interested in signing the petition, or if you're looking for volunteers, like, hey I'm vote -- I'm -- with the Alexia Kemerling for congress campaign -- would you like to sign up? Often I might just let people with disabilities if -- I mean, I'm blind myself, but if I'm just a typical -- person I might just let -- people -- with disabilities walk on by, and not even consider stopping them to ask them if they'd like to sign my petition, or if they'd like to sign up to be a volunteer. So I think part of it is educating campaigns that -- people with disabilities are just as able to participate, just as interested as anybody else. There's also making sure that campaigns' websites are accessible so that people with disabilities can -- look at the campaign websites and sign up to volunteer. There's also making sure that -- if you're phone banking or you're text banking, often this is done through either an app or, like, a computer program -- making sure that that app or that computer program is accessible, which in recent years, I've always found them to be pretty accessible. Lots of blind and low vision people phone bank and text bank - so I think -- with people -- who are blind and low vision, just making sure that the technology is screen reader friendly is a huge thing. And also just really just having an open mind, and realizing that people who are blind and low vision can generally do everything -- everything -- within sort of the campaign office structure that anyone else does. And you just need to ask them -- how best -- like, what they need or how they're going to do it. So I think just having the open mind and asking them in the first place. If you have a friend who's blind or low vision, ask them to be involved. If you see a person who's blind, who uses a wheelchair, or who -- has any -- who's using a walker, or who has an intellectual disability and who's passing by -- don't just let them pass by if you're -- looking for volunteers, or if you're tabling and you're looking for volunteers. Call them over, just as would anyone else. You might find a very passionate and dedicated volunteer.

>> Rostom: Absolutely, thank you. Alexia, same question to you. How can campaigns be more inclusive and welcoming to people with disabilities?

>> Alexia: Yeah, this is a really great question, and I think one thing that I want to talk about is -- campaigns are big fundraising organizations, right? Like, they have to start from nothing, they have to raise a bunch of money to facilitate the campaign, and so I think, like, in those initial processes, budgeting for accessibility, right -- it might not be costly to provide a lot of accommodations, but it can, like, cost money, and if you think of those things in advance, it's not going to be a barrier throughout. So if you budget to be able to provide ASL interpreters within your campaign office and at events, it's going to be easier to recruit people from the deaf and hard of hearing community to be a part of your campaign, right? Because -- you've made accessibility a priority. And I think that is one really big piece in terms of bringing disabled people and deaf people into the work. And I think also just thinking about disability in terms of the policies of your campaign, right? Like, if your campaign does not mention disability at all, or consider accessible housing when you're talking about housing, or consider home and community based services when you're talking about healthcare, you're not going to attract disabled people to work on your campaign, right? And so I think including those issues within your campaign is also going to help a lot. And along with that, I'll talk about something that I feel is really topical right now in our current campaign cycle on both sides of the aisle is just the amount of ableism and ageism that we are seeing used as attacks against candidates. And AAPD, American Association of People with Disabilities, where I work, we sent a letter to both the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention calling on them to stop using this harmful language. Not only does it contribute to bias and very harmful outcomes in our community, but it also is not bringing more people into the work. And things like seeing -- those kinds of language used -- at this high level public conversation is not going to encourage more disabled candidates to run for office, right? It's probably going to have the opposite effect. So I think also just thinking about the general policies and language of your campaign is just as important as thinking about the practices within your campaign for how you're going to make it accessible, both for having more disabled staff, and for reaching more people with disabilities.

>> Stacy: I also really want to make this point and I know it's something that happens a lot. Just as you would not have someone -- it is not okay to consider your disability outreach only hiring, like, family members of people with disabilities, or people who have a disabled friend. That's not hiring a person with a disability, that's not getting the disability perspective. Just as you would not hire a man and say, well, he's got a wife -- he brings the women's perspective, it's -- hiring or having -- a parent of someone with a disability speak might be fine for many reasons. But no, that is not having a person with a disability speak. That is not someone who's bringing a true disability perspective. And that often happens in campaigns. I remember maybe about 8 to 10 years ago, there was a campaign where -- they were looking for someone with a disability for a commercial, and they looked far and wide, and a lot of people were interested, and who they ended up hiring was, like, a parent of a person with a disability. And -- the disability community was so disappointed for this lost opportunity. So having -- hey, my aunt has a disability, that is not the same as I have a disability. Just as you would not say, hi -- I have a family member who is -- a different race, therefore I can speak for this community, it's the same for people with disabilities. People with disabilities -- we speak for ourselves.

>> Rostom: Absolutely.

>> Liz: And if I can add to Stacy's point, hiring people with intellectual disability who might not be able to read, who might not be able to walk, who might not be able to do a lot of things that a person who who got disabled in their later life because of an accident or because of an illness or whatever -- it's not the same as -- you need to understand about people with intellectual disability as well. You can't just say, well, I heard a person with a disability, you told me to hire a person with a disability, and I picked someone who got in an accident in -- their teens or their 20s or whatever, and they're -- paralyzed from their waist down, but -- they might be as smart in many things, but in my book, that's not the same as my kind of disability who -- I never have gone to college. I have never had letters behind my name. And I don't feel sorry for myself anymore, but I'm just saying that I'm here at the table and I deserve to be at the table.

>> Rostom: Excellent, thank you for that. So Liz, based off of your YouTube series, what do you think policy makers have done right to serve the disability community?

>> Liz: Thanks for that question. And I have interviewed probably 15-20 hill members of Congress. I think that they have listened to us. I just interviewed a person -- a very influential member of Congress in -- our field, and in the developmental disability bill. And I can tell you that he looked me in the eye, he tried to use plain language, although it's hard, because people don't understand about plan language. I think just being on my show. They want to be on my show. And why would they want to be on my show? It's all about people with disability, the host has an intellectual disability. And it takes me time -- it takes me time to ask a question, because of the way I talk -- the way I talk. But people -- just be patient. Does that answer your question?

>> Rostom: Absolutely, thank you Liz. I think patience and kindness and inclusion is something that everybody can learn from, and getting people with disabilities involved from the start is a great way of creating inclusion in campaigns. Alexia, I want to talk a little bit about art and storytelling and campaigns. You think art and storytelling in campaigns are a better method than the standard campaign strategy?

>> Alexia: This is Alexia. This is a great question. So I think that I want to -- I have my personal opinion, but I'm gonna -- going to twist the question a little bit on that word better. I think that -- anytime you're thinking about advocating or campaigning or whatever it may be, you have to think about, like, who are you trying to reach, and what do you want them to do? And I think there's so many different answers to those questions that are going to tell you what is the best action to reach those people and get them to do the thing you want them to do. But I will say that from a standpoint of engaging people who maybe aren't engaging or changing someone's mind on an issue that might be hard to change their mind on, I think art and storytelling are sometimes the most effective ways to do those two things, because those can be really hard tasks to accomplish. And the way I kind of think about this is -- if you -- if I asked any of the advocates that I'm on this panel with -- what was the moment that made you get involved in advocacy? Stacy and Liz are probably not going to say, oh, it was an email I received, oh, it was a tweet I saw and I retweeted that tweet, and now I am an advocate full-time, oh, it was like -- a press release I saw, or a phone call. It doesn't mean that all of those things are not effective for building momentum or sharing information, but when it comes to really reaching someone and -- pulling them into the movement or getting them to take an action, we usually all have, like, personal moving stories about what pulled us in, right? And so that's why art and storytelling can be such great tools for that, because it's -- first of all, it can be a very accessible medium, right? Like, you don't need a college degree to enjoy art. You don't need a specific background to engage with -- a theater piece or something creative. So it's accessible in that anyone can find something in art and creative work. And with storytelling, too, it also brings in that personal piece, right? It's much easier to care about an issue if you yourself or someone you know or someone you know of is directly impacted by it. So I think all of those are -- pros for creative campaigns, but I won't say that other tactics aren't also necessary. It just depends on, like, what you're trying to accomplish.

>> Stacy: And I'd like to really quickly say, and Rostom has probably heard me say this many many times, but I often talk about when you're lobbying or when you're advocating for -- with elected officials in their offices, it's often good to have at least one really hard hitting you know statistic or factoid, and one really good story, because hill staffers, voters, whoever you're trying to convince -- they're all just people and we're all different. And some people are really motivated by statistics and hard numbers, and -- they don't want to hear a story, they just want the hard facts. So for those people, that's what you use. And for some people, it's difficult for them to understand, like -- what do all these statistics mean? They're just numbers on paper. So having that story is really helpful. So I like what Alexia said about it's not about better, it's you have to use -- that's one strategy that's often ignored, but you have to have a variety of strategies.

>> Rostom: Those are all excellent points. I think sometimes people don't realize how policy affects every area of life. But Alexia, I want to go back to you and kind of dig into, like, some other creative ways of campaigning. Are there ways of campaigning that people -- the general public wouldn't necessarily know about that would seem surprising to somebody that's just getting involved in the policy process?

>> Alexia: Yeah, I think that's a really good question, and I really like that you used the word surprise, because I think that a good creative action is going to catch someone by surprise, right? It's going to pique their interest. I think there are so many different creative strategies that I've seen out there, and I kind of want to use one not from campaign, but from the Rev Up Network. So we are a national movement, but we have coalitions at the state and local level. And one of our partners in Rev Up New York, the organization Self Advocates of New York State, they do a really cool organizing strategy where they have voter registration drives, but instead of just saying like -- come to this event to register to vote cuz like -- if you're not interested in voting already, why would you go to that? That's not very, like, exciting, it's not going to pull you in. What they do instead is they host the great peanut butter and jelly debates. And they have, like, a whole mock debate with, like, fake candidates about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. And then they work with the county Boards of Election to have actual accessible voting machines there. And so then after this, like, very over-the-top debate by self advocates on a fake topic, then people actually go and vote on a real ballot marking device for what they want to win. And so, and then they register the people to vote after the event, right? But it's very creative because it takes this topic that is kind of goofy and -- but you need no background knowledge. Everyone knows about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, right? But -- and then you get experience with the voting machine, and you get to register to vote, and all of a sudden you're, like, civically engaged, even though you just came for this, like, funny fake debate, right/ So I think that is like a very, like, surprising and creative event that I really love.

>> Stacy: I love that! I want to be involved in that. That's amazing.

>> Rostom: Yeah, that's so cool. You're giving people the opportunity to actually get involved in the process that might seem cumbersome or scary to them in the first place. What an amazing -- what an amazing thing. So voting is one aspect of civic engagement. Are there resources or support systems that people can find more information or get involved at the local, state, and federal levels? And Stacy, I'll start with you.

>> Stacy: Sure, well, the first piece of advice would be to look at -- each candidate's website. So if you're watching TV or you're listening to the radio or -- you're driving by and you see a sign and there's a candidate that interests you -- the first thing to do is go to their website. Hopefully their website is -- screen reader and adaptive technology accessible. And find out how they describe where they stand on the issues. See if that resonates with you. Then you might also go to the organizations that you maybe admire, like, whether it's a disability rights organization, or environmental organization, or a housing organization -- any organization that you contribute to or that you have a -- a place in your heart for. And often they have, like, report cards for candidates -- of how they're voting on the issues that this organization cares about. We don't have one here at RespectAbility, but let's pretend that we did. We might say, okay, how does this candidate vote on voting accessibility? How does this candidate feel about disability employment? How does this candidate feel about -- communications technology accessibility, or -- improving the asset limit -- increasing the asset limits on SSI? And based on how they feel about those things, we give them a grade or a score or a percentage. And that helps people with disabilities know -- or the people who are stakeholders know, hey -- this is how they're doing on the issues that we care about and we know you care about. So -- and that's the same for disability organizations, that's the same for a lot of different organizations. So I think -- finding out where the candidates stand -- using the internet is is really helpful. As far as how to register to vote, frankly, I mean with Google, you can just write -- you can just type in "how do I register to vote in Nebraska?" Or "Nebraska voter registration." And basically, it'll take you to the page. So with the internet, we do have a lot more information at our fingertips. And then of course we also have -- initiatives that I'm going to let Alexia talk about like Rev Up -- like some of the work that RespectAbility is doing where -- we're providing resources, such as this webinar, and additional resources that we're going to be providing throughout the year that help people know -- where to sign up to vote, how to sign up to vote, what information they might need. But generally if you just Google -- registering to vote in Maryland, you'll be taken to a website where -- and often it's your Secretary of State's website where you can get information on -- what you need to do.

>> Rostom: Thank you Stacy. Liz, same question to you. What are some resources that people with disabilities can use to stay informed around voting on the -- state, local, and federal levels?

>> Liz: Well Tuesdays with Liz -- and I hate to make [crosstalk] this all about me, but that's the reason why I started Tuesdays with Liz. It really came from my idea. [indistinct] all about yourself. So I would go, and you can understand the issues, and therefore you can vote on the way that you want to vote or talk about the issues the way you want to talk about them. On the other issues, resources are AUCD have a lot of plain language flyers and materials that we put out -- on how to vote, how to get involved with voting. You could go to League of Women Voters, so those are some ideas.

>> Rostom: Thank you Liz. And I encourage you to go follow Tuesdays with Liz on YouTube. Alexia, could you explain some of the resources that Rev Up has, and any other support systems that people with disabilities can be informed when it comes to voting?

>> Alexia: Yeah, definitely. So Rev Up, we have four national meetings per year. So anyone can join. You don't have to be in a Rev Up coalition, but it's a really great way to learn about what's going on nationally, what's going on at the state level, what are other states doing, how can you get involved. You can also go to our website and get connected to the Rev Up coalition in your area, or if there's not one, you can work with me to start one. We also have a number of resources on our website just about voting and improving election accessibility. And -- when we talked earlier about the availability and accessibility of language around how to vote and how to register to vote being barrier, Rev Up creates state guides for disabled voters for all 50 states and Washington D.C. that answer how to register to vote, where, when, and how to vote, and these are reviewed for plain language with plain language experts. Liz Weintraub has actually been one of our reviewers in the past, but we keep expanding each year how many people we get to review them, so that they can become more and more accessible. And that is a big resource that we produce that I think a lot of folks use, but I think, really, the best way to get engaged is to meet other advocates, and coming to those Rev Up meetings or joining a coalition is a really great way to do that.

>> Rostom: Excellent. Yeah, I think finding your network is important, because it keeps you engaged. That's a great point. So if I were a young person with a disability, what advice would you give me, Alexia, if I was just starting on my policy journey?

>> Alexia: Oh man, this is a really good question. I think I would say a few things. One, I would say, you're not alone in this journey. I think -- if you've been pulled into advocacy and you don't yet know the full scope of disabled people who are out here doing this work, who have been doing this work for decades, it can feel, like, really daunting. And if you're not connected to the community yet, you might feel, like, more alone. But know that there are so many people out there doing the work, and if there is an issue that you're passionate about, chances are there are some disabled leaders who are out there passionate about it too. And you just have to find them. And then I would also say that advocacy sometimes means doing a hundred different things and never knowing which is the one or which is the twenty that moved the issue forward. And you kind of have to make peace with that, right? Like, you have to just keep trying things year after year, trying different things, doing the same things again and again. It can be exhausting, and it can be hard not knowing, like, okay -- which of the things that I did were actually worth it, because sometimes it's a combination of a lot of little things. And so just remembering that all the work you're putting in is moving the needle forward, even if you don't get to see it immediately.

>> Stacy: It's like applying for a job or dating. You never know which is going to be the job application that gets you the job. You might apply for 20 and -- you get the 21st. And -- it's a good thing you continued applying or you mean -- just keep plugging away.

>> Rostom: Yeah, you only need one, right?

>> Stacy: Exactly.

>> Rostom: Stacy, same to you. What's some advice you'd give to a young disabled person getting started in their policy journey?

>> Stacy: There are two pieces of advice that I would give. Number one is what Alexia said: get involved in the disability community. Whether that's the cross disability community or -- the -- a community of people with the disability you happen to have. For me that was getting involved in the National Association of Blind Students and the National Federation of the Blind. That was how I got involved in policy in the first place, going to NFB Washington seminars, getting involved in the National Association of Blind Students. It was actually through the National Association of Blind Students website that I learned about the AAPD Congressional internship program. And if not -- if I hadn't been on that Listserv, I never would have heard of it, and I would not have interned for Senator Brownback, I would not be in this career, truly. So get involved in -- get involved in the disability community, whatever you feel comfortable with, whether that's cross disability community nationally, whether that's your particular disability nationally, whether that's something local -- find a space that feels comfortable and right to you, and that resonates with you, and is going to motivate you and make you want to do the work, and want to contribute. I also suggest, as I plugged earlier, the AAPD Congressional internship program. Even if you don't think that you want to work for Congress, it's an excellent way to learn about how Congress works. And when you are dealing with policy -- that's what that -- often that's what you want to know, like, what's going to move Congress, or what's going to move your state legislature? So the AAPD Congressional internship -- and again, that's Alexia's organization, the American Association of People with Disabilities is just an excellent program. It's launched many careers in public policy, including my own. So I would certainly recommend that one. And then just generally speaking -- of course you can get involved in your own community in any way. I mean, whether that's -- if you are really interested in -- education, go to a school board meeting, make a comment as a member of the public. You can go to your city council meeting, and you can make a comment as a member of the public. If you want to, say, stand up as a member of the public -- usually you have to, like, sign up, and there's a time during the meeting at the end or at a certain time, and say you know what, I want to let you know that, like, our city is not as ADA Compliant as it could be, there's not enough curb cuts, it's not very wheelchair accessible or -- we need -- whatever it is -- go to those meetings and make your voice heard. So -- that's useful to do -- but connecting with the disability community is a powerful way to do that and probably the most effective way to do that.

>> Rostom: Some great suggestions, thanks Stacy. Liz, what about you? If you were to give any advice to a young disabled person, what would it be when it comes to their policy journey?

>> Liz: I would just say to fight your way into the door. That's how I -- no one thought I could do this. No one thought that I could work in the policy arena. I don't have letters behind my name, no, or a degree, but somehow I got people who believe in myself, me, and I think be educated and learn, and have somebody -- who will help you -- to understand these issues, and not to say, oh yeah, you can't do this. Well yes you can. If you sat down with me and -- explain things in a way that I would understand, then -- I can be a policy person just as much as you can be.

>> Rostom: Thank you Liz. All important messages. I want to give a little bit of space to my panelists to give a final thought, and if you don't have anything to share, that's okay too. Liz, I want to start with you.

>> Liz: I would just say voting is so important. It's one of the -- one of our -- as American citizens, it's one of the rights that I take very seriously. And so, I want to encourage everyone to vote. And it's harder to vote these days for people. There's laws in all kinds of states that are saying that we can't vote and we need -- we can't get water and we -- it's hard for us to walk in -- I mean, it's hard for us to stand in line, but we need to vote. We need to vote. And so take that seriously. And if you need help with that, there are a lot of organization. The Protection and Advocacy Organizations is one of them. It's -- excuse me -- it's now called Disability Rights Network, and every state has one of them, and you can -- if you're not being fair -- treated fairly, you can do -- you can go to them. You can -- there are other organizations, but just -- we need to vote. Vote.

>> Rostom: Absolutely, thank you Liz. Alexia, what about you? Do you have any final thoughts?

>> Alexia: Yeah, I think I would just say thank you for having us, and I'm so happy to be on a panel with Liz and Stacy, and to be part of the many amazing disabled people who are working on civic engagement and working to make it more accessible for people with disabilities to get involved.

>> Rostom: Thank you. Stacy, what about you?

>> Stacy: I think the two things I would say is that -- to echo Liz, I mean, you need to find a way to get involved, and whether that's -- volunteering for a candidate, volunteering as a poll worker -- like we talked about showing up at your city council meeting or your education meeting, that's often a great way. A lot of citizens don't do that. I actually showed up at our transport -- our City's transportation board meeting as just a member of the public. I had my kids with me. I had my baby in a front carrier. I went up to the microphone and talked, and like, said my piece. It's very passionate, wasn't super flattering to the city's public transportation system. And little did I know, a few weeks later I got called and asked -- if I could -- if I was interested in serving on the Mayor's transportation board. So sometimes you'll meet people at those meetings, and you'll find ways to get involved in local activism in your community at those city council meetings, at those board meetings. And the other final thing I'd like to say -- to any campaigns that are watching, or anybody who's looking to get -- people with disabilities involved in their cause or involved in their campaign -- people with disabilities are a cross-section of American society. We represent every gender, every race, every sexual orientation, religion, political persuasion, geographic location -- nationality, immigration status, everything you can possibly think of. So we are not a community that you want to ignore. We're -- I think sometimes parties or candidates will either think, oh, it's not even worth it -- people with disabilities all vote one way or -- vote for this party or that party, or they'll think, oh, well we have people with disabilities in the bag, people with disabilities all vote for us anyway, so we don't even need to try. And that's not true -- our grand mother who uses a walker and lives out in a farm community in Nebraska is a person with a disability, as is an activist on a college campus. So all political parties, all campaigns should be looking to include people with disabilities, because if you are a candidate or you are a campaign, there's a person with a disability out there, probably many who -- who are your target audience. And -- there are disabled soccer moms, there are disabled -- LGBTQ activists, there are disabled NASCAR dads, I mean, we're everybody. So there's a place in your campaign for us.

>> Rostom: Absolutely. Thank you everybody. Thank you to my panelists and everybody's watching. Please take the time to take the survey at the end of this webinar, and we will have a fully captioned version of this on social media. We will see you on May 1st for our second Civic Engagement webinar. Have a great day. Take care.