



Betty Ireland
Secretary of State

PRESS RELEASE

Date: Monday, March 26, 2007
For Immediate Release

Contact: Ben Beakes
(304)558-6000 or (304)546-6759

Secretary of State, WVARF introduce '*Here to be Heard*' campaign

CHARLESTON, W.Va.: Secretary of State Betty Ireland and the West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (WVARF) introduced the '*Here to be Heard: Voter Registration for West Virginians with Disabilities*' campaign in a joint press conference today. In partnership with WVARF, the Secretary of State's Office will hold voter registration drives at more than 30 WVARF locations across the state starting on Monday, April 2nd in Morgantown.

"The loudest voice an individual can have on election day is his vote," Secretary Ireland said. "So I'm very excited about our partnership with WVARF and what this program will mean for people with disabilities—giving them a voice through their right to vote."

Tim Morris, President of WVARF, says he too is excited that clients at community rehabilitation programs can take advantage of such a great opportunity. "As has been said, democracy does not guarantee equality, only equality of opportunity," Morris said. "The '*Here to be Heard*' campaign will not only serve as a voter registration drive, but also as an opportunity and educational awareness effort to get West Virginians with disabilities involved in the election process."

Secretary Ireland pointed out that we have achieved many voting milestones for our citizens with disabilities including the new accessible electronic voting machines that were used for the first time in the 2006 elections. "We heard many wonderful success stories, after the elections last year, about people with certain disabilities who had voted independently and in complete privacy for the first time on the new voting machines."

The WVARF leadership approached Secretary Ireland with the idea of the '*Here to be Heard*' campaign and requested her participation in the project. "Secretary Ireland became involved immediately," Morris said. "She has long been very attentive to the needs of our citizens with disabilities. Now, working as partners, we believe we can give a voice to those waiting and wanting to be heard."

For a schedule of registration drives please visit www.wvsos.com or call 304-558-6000.