



Window to the World

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Newsletter of the Tennessee Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped

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Park Service Offers Access Pass

The National Park Service makes a lifetime entrance pass to national parks, monuments, historic sites, recreational areas, and national wildlife refuges that charge entrance fees available to U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are blind or permanently disabled. The Golden Access Passport admits the pass holder and accompanying passengers in a private vehicle to parks with a per-vehicle fee; where a per-person fee is charged, the pass admits the pass holder and his or her spouse and children. The Golden Access Passport also provides a 50 percent discount on federal usage fees for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching, and tours.

The pass may be obtained by showing proof of a medically determined permanent disability or eligibility for receiving benefits under federal law. It must be obtained in person at a federal area where an entrance fee is charged. To locate a convenient park service site, visit the National Park Service portal,

Your Vote Does Count!

“Visit Your Parks” at: www.nps.gov/parks.html. Visitors are encouraged to telephone the site to inquire about pass availability and required documentation before traveling. (From: “News,” January-March, 2004, Vol. 35, No. 1, published by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress.)

What discounts are available at Tennessee State Parks? Disabled visitors, residents and non-residents of Tennessee may obtain an approximate 50% discount on camping fees charged at all parks upon showing satisfactory proof of such disability. Senior citizens (age 62 and over) are entitled to a 10% discount on their stay at state park inns. Other discounts vary from park to park. For more information contact Tennessee State Parks at 1-888-867-2757

The Tennessee State Parks and Recreation Division offers accessible rooms and full-service cabins for customers with disabilities. Reservations for these facilities can be made through a toll-free reservation service by calling 1-866-836-6757 (toll-free).

The next national election will be held on November 2, 2004. It is a fundamental right of all United States citizens over the age of 18 to vote. The right to vote empowers you as a citizen to elect officials who create laws and policies that directly impact your daily life. Individuals with disabilities have the right to register and vote in all elections by themselves or with help. The individual needing help has the right to select who they want to assist in voting and to vote the way they want, as long as the person assisting is not an employer, a union representative, or a candidate.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requiring all voting precincts to have one voting machine that is accessible for people with disabilities by 2006, so they may not be available in the upcoming election. However, in Tennessee you can take advantage of the option of participating in early voting. Early voting begins 20 days prior to each Election Day and closes 5 days prior to the election. Early voting is usually done at the county election commission office, but be sure to call your local office to verify local early voting locations. Another option would be to request an absentee ballot. You may do this by contacting your county election commission office in writing.

To participate in early voting or to vote on Election Day, you must first be registered. At least 30 days before an election, you may register to vote via mail or in person at your local election commission office or any NVRA agency such as Department of Motor Vehicles,

Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Department of Health, and the Department of Veteran's Affairs. You can also pick up registration materials at your public library, post office, election commission office and county clerk's office. Mail-in voter registration forms are available online at: www.state.tn.us/sos/election/ss-3010.pdf. If you register by mail, you are required to vote in person (NOT by absentee ballot) the first time you vote. In addition, any mailed registration form must be postmarked at least 30 days before the election.

Your vote does make a difference. Throughout history, many important elections were decided on the basis on ONE vote. In 1776, English was chosen over German as the language for America by ONE vote. In 1800, after an Electoral College tie, the House of Representatives chose Thomas Jefferson the 3rd President of the United State by ONE vote. In 1868, President Andrew Johnson was saved from impeachment by ONE vote. In 1923, Hitler won the leadership of the German Nazi party by ONE vote.

If your right to vote has been violated or if your polling place is not accessible, please contact Tennessee Protection & Advocacy, Inc. at 1-800-342-1660 or 1-888-852-2852, TTY. For more information contact: 1) Your local county election commissioner; 2) Tennessee State Coordinator of Election (615) 741-7956; or 3) Tennessee Protection & Advocacy, Inc., (800) 342-1660; or (888)852-2852, TTY.

Free Matter Mail Works For You

As you know, the United States Postal Service handles a huge volume of mail each and every day. A portion of that mail is the books and magazines that are sent back and forth between libraries for the blind and physically handicapped (LBPH) and library patrons. In FY 2002, LBPHs loaned 22,917,057 books and magazines to patrons across the country. All of this mail is handled as “free matter” mail. This does not mean the post office does this at no cost. The Library of Congress reimburses the United State Postal service annually for this task.

According to “Mailing Free Matter for Blind and Visually Handicapped Persons,” published in March, 1998, all persons who are eligible for LBPH services qualify to mail certain items free of postage, but the post office may require a statement from a “competent authority” before allowing an individual to use the free matter mailing privilege. Libraries can mail reading matter and players for using audio books. In addition, equipment or parts for equipment, specifically designed or adapted for use by persons with visual disabilities, can also be mailed using “free matter” mail. Letters in raised characters (braille), in 14-point or larger type, or in the form of sound recordings may be mailed free of postage FROM an eligible person. Handwritten or typewritten letters, however, are subject to the applicable rate of postage when

mailed TO or FROM an eligible person. Also subject to applicable postage are bills paid by mail by eligible persons and letters in any form when mailed TO eligible persons from ineligible persons.

Any item that is mailed using the “free matter” mailing privilege must contain NO advertising. The mail is subject to inspection by the Postal Service so letters must be mailed unsealed. Eligibility for free mailing for the blind and other visually handicapped persons does not include special arrangements for pickup or delivery of mail. Customers should contact their local post office to request special arrangements.

If you have problems with the pickup or delivery of free matter mail, it is best to contact your local post office. Be sure to get the name of the postal official that you speak with. Most problems can be resolved at your local post office. If a problem cannot be resolved at your local post office, you may use a postage-paid customer service card, available from your local post office, or write to: Consumer Advocate, United States Postal Service, 475 L’Enfant Plz, Rm 5821, Washington DC 20260-2200.

“The public must learn that the blind man is neither genius nor a freak nor an idiot. He has a mind that can be educated, a hand which can be trained, ambitions which it is right for him to strive to realize, and it is the duty of the public to help him make the best of himself so that he can win light through work.” – Helen Keller

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Administration and Staff

The Honorable Riley C. Darnell, Secretary of State; Dr. Edwin S. Gleaves, State Librarian & Archivist;

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