

18 March, 2014

To,
Chief Electoral Officer
Principle Secretary to Government
Public (Elections III) Department
Government of Tamilnadu
Chennai

Dear Sir,

Sub: Suggestions to improve the user friendly services to the Visually Impaired for the upcoming General Elections in April 2014

This is with regard to your invitation to meet with the representatives of the Differently Abled Persons in regard to the General Elections to Lok Sabha 2014.

Nethrodaya is a self-help organization serving the visually impaired population of Tamilnadu. For the past 12 years, Nethrodaya has been able to selflessly serve more than 30,000 visually impaired persons and recognizing this, the Government of Tamil Nadu has awarded it the "Best Institution 2012" for its outstanding services to the differently abled population.

Please find below our suggestions to make the voting machines more user friendly to the visually impaired persons and to improve their voting experience.

SUGGESTIONS

1. TOTALLY BLIND- The machines should contain Braille display with the names of the candidates. They Braille sheets can be printed and pasted as stickers along with the normal print of candidates.
2. LOW VISION- For low vision voters, the fonts and emblems should be of a larger size and magnified.
3. ILLITERATE BLIND- Voting machines should have audio enabled softwares for the visually impaired voters to know more clearly who they are voting for. Ear phones or head phones can be provided for confidentiality for all around.
4. The Visually impaired voters should be given extra time for voting.
5. The Visually Impaired voters should be allowed inside the polling booth, till the machine along with an escort.
6. For the proof of Identification, they should consider the Disability Identity Card.
7. All Welfare Schemes for the Visually Impaired were stopped and discontinued during the previous elections. This created a lot of difficulty for the visually impaired. This year, the

schemes should not be disturbed due to the elections and ensure the smooth distribution of these regular welfare schemes. The Election Commissioner should send a letter of instruction to all the departments.

8. The polling officers need to be given exclusive training on the implementation of the above suggestions.
9. It will be beneficial if the polling booths and halls were located at convenient and easily accessible areas such as bus stands and railway stations for the convenience of the visually impaired.
10. The acknowledgement receipt should be given in Braille format for the visually impaired.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

C. Govindakrishnan
Founder & Trustee, Nethrodaya