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“People with Disabilities Must Stand the Line”

My name is Tim Carey, I’m 50 years old and I was born and raised in Wisconsin, but I’ve lived mostly in Appleton. I was recently one of several people who filed a lawsuit and won against a supreme court ruling saying that no one other than the voter can return absentee ballots in person.

I have Duchenne muscular dystrophy so I’m a wheelchair user and I’m also on a ventilator. I have been advocating locally for a long time about disability rights in general and I started a website in 2009 called disabilityvoice.com. It’s a website that is specifically about disability rights where I post informative articles and really anything for people with disabilities.

In 2021 I graduated from the WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities’ Partners in Policymaking class. After graduating I started getting emails about my experience with voting troubles during the pandemic and with new guidance from the WI Supreme Court about absentee ballots. The state Supreme Court ruled that absentee ballot drop boxes are illegal and only the voter can return their absentee ballot in person. Also, only the voter can mail or place the ballot in the mailbox. I was very upset when I learned about new voting rules since I can’t move any of my limbs, so physically mailing or returning my own ballot is impossible. I have been voting with absentee ballots since I was 18 and now, I was put in the position of having to ask my nurses or other supporters to break the law.

Immediately I was worried I would no longer be able to vote. People have fought and died for the right to vote throughout history. What makes people with disabilities any less than any other group that has had to fight for their right to vote? Shortly after sharing my fears and experiences with voting through several surveys I was contacted by an attorney from Law Forward and asked if I wanted to get more involved in advocacy and specifically in a case to challenge the new ruling. On August 31st we got the news that the ruling had come down in our favor.

The good news is that I've done absentee voting since I was 18. It's an old hat. Now after this win it feels like I can still do like I achieve more advocacy goals! I helped make sure people with disabilities throughout the entire country can vote and forever. It feels good to have helped to hold the line. What is sad is that because we are people with disabilities this might not be remembered. Well, more advocacy for to do. I don't advocate for recognition, so calling it Carey vs. WEC made me proud. People with disabilities want to follow the law, participate, and exercise our right to vote. I really wanted to thank Law firms that worked on this along with the other plaintiffs. I plan to keep watching for more troublesome rulings or laws that restrict voting or other rights. I'm going to keep on voting, that's for sure.