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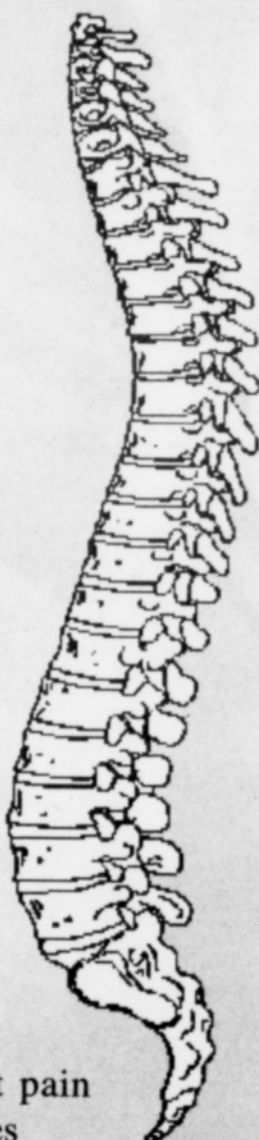
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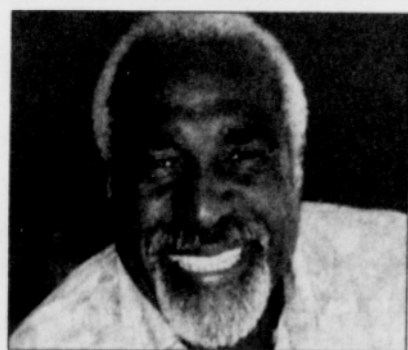


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LAW & JUSTICE



Lewis Crew, 75, receives help from a member of a voter assistance team while voting on an iPad in Beaverton. (AP photo)

Disabled Use iPad To Vote

New technology supplements traditional ballot

(AP)— Oregon was first in the nation to have all residents vote by mail. Now it's pioneering another idea: vote by iPad.

Voters in five counties are filling out and returning their mail-in ballots for a Tuesday special primary election to replace former U.S. Rep. David Wu, who resigned following a sex scandal. A handful will mark their ballots not with a pen, but with the tip of their finger.

It's the latest attempt at using new technology to help voters with disabilities cast ballots privately.

Armed with iPads and portable printers, county election workers are going to parks, nursing homes, community centers and anywhere else they might find groups of voters who have trouble filling out traditional paper ballots.

Using the iPad, disabled voters can call up the right ballot and tap the screen to pick a candidate,

with or without the help of election workers. The voters then print the completed ballot and stuff it in an envelope to sign, take with them and drop in the mail or an official ballot box.

Voters with poor vision can adjust the font size and screen colors, or they can have the iPad read them the candidates' names and even the voter pamphlet. A voter with limited mobility could attach a "sip-and-puff" device to control the screen. Lewis Crews, 75, who has severe arthritis, didn't have to hold a pen to fill out his ballot.

"It's a lot simpler for me. I think it's a great setup they got," Crews told The Associated Press last week in a phone interview after he filled out and printed one of the first-ever iPad ballots.

Elections officials helped Crews operate the iPad, he said, "but now that I've seen how it works, I'm confident I can do it

on my own."

State elections officials say they'll use the same system in the special general election in January. And if the pilot project is successful, they'll make the service available across the state. They believe Oregon is the first state to try using iPads to mark ballots.

Elections officials emphasize that, technically speaking, nobody is voting by iPad. Rather, they're using the device to mark a ballot that's dispensed from a portable printer and mailed to elections offices for counting, just like a hand-marked ballot.

Federal law requires that people with disabilities have the same opportunity for access and participation in the voting process, including privacy and independence. That means polling places have to be accessible, and elections officials have to make accessible voting equipment available.