For Immediate Release

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ACB Urges Department of Justice to Ensure Right to Private, Independent Vote

“Individuals with disabilities have a right to full participation in voting, including absentee voting,” stated Eric Bridges, executive director of the American Council of the Blind. “Persons with disabilities have fought for decades for their right to vote privately and independently. Now, especially in light of COVID-19, such persons are fighting for their right to vote via absentee ballot.”

On May 15, 2020, ACB filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Disability Rights Section, to emphasize the inaccessibility of absentee voting for persons who are blind and visually impaired in the state of Idaho during the 2020 primary election. The complaint provided personal declarations of Idaho residents who, as it stands now, cannot vote privately and independently in their home state via absentee ballot. This submission was a supplemental complaint to one filed by Disability Rights Idaho (DRI) on April 23, 2020. The complaint filed by DRI stressed concerns about the lack of information being provided for voters with disabilities, including elderly individuals with disabilities, regarding accessibility options so that voters can maintain their right to vote independently during the May 19, 2020 primary election.

“DRI remains concerned that voters with disabilities across the state of Idaho may become disenfranchised by the lack of uniformity and specificity that is being offered when it comes to providing accommodations to voters with disabilities,” said Courtney Holthus, Advocacy Director with DRI. “Voters with disabilities have the right to request modifications to the voting process. They have a right to equally effective communication, including the provision of ballots in alternative formats. Those rights are not waived or eliminated by the COVID-19 crisis.”

ACB urges the DOJ to ensure the right to a private and independent vote in Idaho for all future elections. Both organizations are confident that these complaints with the Department will yield positive findings that will impact voting accessibility nationwide.