

**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR THE FULL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF ALL
CITIZENS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

KUALA LUMPUR (23 JULY 2026) - The right to participate in political life, including the right to vote and to stand for election as a representative, is a fundamental human right of every citizen without discrimination. According to statistics from the Department for the Development of Persons with Disabilities (JPOKU), Department of Social Welfare (JKM), shared with SUHAKAM on 2 May 2026, Negeri Sembilan alone has 28,976 registered Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who are eligible to vote. This figure does not include individuals with temporary disabilities arising from various factors such as accidents or illnesses. These statistics underscore the importance of ensuring that the electoral system is genuinely inclusive and guarantees the full, effective and meaningful participation of all voters, regardless of the type of disability they may have.

Access to political participation is a fundamental right that applies to all citizens without discrimination. It is guaranteed under the Federal Constitution, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Act 685), and Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, SUHAKAM's findings indicate that inclusive participation of PWDs has yet to be fully realised due to various structural barriers before, during and after the electoral process. Accordingly, SUHAKAM calls upon the Election Commission (EC), political parties, election candidates and relevant agencies to safeguard these rights by taking the following measures:

- i. Ensure Physical Accessibility Throughout the Electoral Process**
 - Ensure that all polling stations comply with the principles of universal design, including the provision of ramps, accessible pathways, designated parking spaces, accessible toilets and polling channels that are easily accessible.
 - Provide appropriate mobility assistance and transportation for PWD voters who require such support.
- ii. Provide Accessible Election Information for Everyone**
 - Make election manifestos available in easy-to-read formats, Braille, large print and digital formats compatible with screen readers.
 - Ensure that websites, campaign materials and manifestos comply with digital accessibility standards.
 - Provide subtitles, closed captions and Malaysian Sign Language (BIM) interpretation during all election talks, debates and campaign events.
- iii. Strengthen Disability-Friendly Voting Procedures**
 - Provide clear information on the rights of PWD voters, including the use of companions and the availability of reasonable accommodation during the voting process.
 - Ensure election officials receive training on disability rights, inclusive communication and the provision of reasonable accommodation, including encouraging the learning of Malaysian Sign Language.
 - Guarantee the secrecy of the ballot and the autonomy of PWD voters throughout the voting process.
- iv. Expand Inclusive Civic Education**
 - Raise awareness among PWDs, their families, caregivers and the wider community about the importance of political participation.
 - Provide election-related information in plain language and in formats that meet the needs of all categories of PWDs.
- v. Promote the Participation of PWDs as Election Candidates**
 - Encourage political parties to provide opportunities, support and leadership pathways for PWD candidates.
 - Review legal, financial and social barriers that restrict the participation of PWDs as election candidates.



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SUHAKAM emphasises that an inclusive democracy is not merely about ensuring that everyone is able to cast their vote, but also about ensuring that every citizen has equal access to information, political campaigns, the voting process and the opportunity to be elected as a representative. Malaysia cannot achieve a truly fair democratic system if any citizen continues to face difficulties or barriers in exercising their political rights solely because of disability. The full and effective participation of PWDs in political life forms part of Malaysia's commitment to human rights and the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In conjunction with the upcoming Negeri Sembilan State Election, SUHAKAM encourages PWDs, family members, caregivers, organisations representing PWDs, election observers and members of the public to promptly report any barriers encountered throughout the electoral process via email at PWDcommittee@suhakam.org.my. The Negeri Sembilan State Election presents another opportunity for all stakeholders to fulfil their shared responsibility in ensuring meaningful inclusivity throughout the electoral process, particularly for persons with disabilities.

When discussing this issue, SUHAKAM is often asked about the actual number of PWDs who are unable to vote. SUHAKAM's position is that even if only one person is denied the right to political participation, the electoral process cannot be regarded as fully inclusive, in line with the principle of **"Leave No One Behind"**.

SUHAKAM remains committed to working closely with the Election Commission, government agencies, political parties, organisations representing persons with disabilities and civil society to strengthen an electoral system that is more inclusive, accessible and respectful of the rights of every Malaysian citizen.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
23 July 2026**