



A Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

As many of you know, October is a special time for the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) as it marks Residents' Rights Month – a time to celebrate the dignity, respect and the value of every resident/tenant residing in long-term care.

Because 2016 is a presidential election year, this year's theme – "My Vote Matters" – highlights residents' right to vote and participate in the political process. In this first weekly issue of *The Advocate* for the month of October, our focus is on a power of attorney's role in assisting a resident or tenant in their civic duty of voting.



There are, of course, two types of powers of attorney. A financial power of attorney legally authorizes an agent to make decisions regarding financial matters on behalf of an individual (the principal) when he/she is unable to make financial management decisions on his/her own. Similarly, a health care power of attorney authorizes an agent to make medical decisions on an individual's behalf when the attending physician determines the principal is unable to make decisions for himself/herself.

Since voting is a civic responsibility involving neither financial nor medical decision-making, an agent with financial or health care power of attorney has no legal authority over an individual's vote. While a resident/tenant may certainly request their agent's assistance in

accessing a ballot or polling place, signing their name or mailing an absentee ballot, a power of attorney does not enable an agent to restrict access to voting, influence a vote or cast a vote for another individual. In fact, all acts and decisions related to voting may only be done with the principal's permission and in his/her presence.

For further information on assisting residents/tenants to vote, please contact your local county auditor's office or call the OSLTCO at (866) 236-1430.

Deanna Clingan-Fischer, JD

Voting resources available to assist older Iowans, adults with disabilities



The Iowa Disability Vote Coalition, a network of Iowa allies working together to create and grow the political power of Iowans with disabilities, has posted a variety of materials about voting in Iowa on the [Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council's website](#). Resources include links to the Secretary of State, the Iowa Democratic and Iowa Republican parties, a voter's rights card, videos and more.

The coalition also provides a voter access training to groups and organizations, including long-term care facilities, upon request. To learn more about voter trainings or to request one, visit <http://www.idaction.org/vote/training/>.

The mission of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care by investigating complaints, seeking resolutions to problems and providing advocacy, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.