My name is Teresa Thompson. My son Stephen is 20 years old. He has a disability.

Stephen talked about voting several years ago. He was watching Hillary Clinton’s political race for the Democratic nomination for President.

Just before he turned 18, I was advised to file a petition for a limited conservatorship so that I could make financial and medical decisions for Stephen after he became an adult. I felt he needed help making decisions in these areas of life.

I had no idea that by seeking a conservatorship for him that I would cause him to lose the right to vote. I went to a Self-Help Clinic to get assistance in filling out the conservatorship forms. They had me check off a box that, unknown to me, would trigger the loss of voting rights.

The court appointed an attorney to represent Stephen in the conservatorship process. This attorney told me that it would be inconsistent with the concept of conservatorship for Stephen to have the right to vote.

This did not sound right to me, so I contacted Dr. Nora Baladerian with the Disability and Abuse Project for help. She put me in touch with attorney Tom Coleman.

Tom researched the law and discovered that what the judges of the Superior Court are doing violates federal voting rights laws. So he educated Stephen’s attorney and Stephen got to keep his right to vote.

Now we are all working together to get the voting rights reinstated for thousands of other people with disabilities in Los Angeles who lost them in the conservatorship process.

It is amazing how this effort started with just one case, and one young man – my son Stephen – who wanted to vote. One person can make a difference.

Teresa Thompson