



UPDATE FROM WASHINGTON

AS OF: 1/31/2010

Hello Legislative Liaisons and Chapter Presidents,

This is your fourth official *Update from Washington*! The *Updates* are intended to give a simpler picture of what has been happening on a national level with regard to policy surrounding the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Legislatively speaking, things have been a bit slow lately as Congress has only recently begun its second session in the middle of January. Things will begin picking up again quickly, with many things to come. Stay tuned!

As always, if you have comments on the issues addressed or have questions, would like more information or would like assistance in your state, do not hesitate to contact me at Stephanie@apse.org or (920) 495-9688. Thank you and remember, “*A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history*” (Gandhi).

Happy New Year,

Public Policy Associate
APSE

EMPLOYMENT/TRANSITION:

APSE has been working to promote the phase-out of 14 (c) certificates and subminimum wage. Through discussions with key Hill staff there is continued dialogue as to what is the best approach at ensuring increased integrated employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities.

- Senator Harkin (D-IA) and his staff would like to address the issue of 14(c) and is collaborating with various disability organizations to draft a piece of legislation. At this point however, there is no specific timeline of when a bill will be released.

- On January 12th the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs

(OFCCP) hosted an online listening session on affirmative action and nondiscrimination obligations of contractors and subcontractors under 503 of the Rehab Act.

- As a response to President Obama's State of the Union address on January 27th, 2010, Congress will attempt to pass a "jobs bill". APSE will be sending a letter to the Hill and key Members of Congress to ensure that individuals with disabilities are included in the pool of prospective employers that the bill will relate to.

- The Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD) hosted a listening session with CPSD members, individuals from HHS, ODEP, Westat and CMS to discuss the research contract awarded to Westat to study employment of individuals with mental illness. The session allowed individuals to talk about current models of employment that are success for individuals with disabilities, such as supported employment.

HEALTHCARE:

Healthcare has reached an unfortunate standstill lately as a result of events over the past weeks. APSE still supports comprehensive health care reform and recently encouraged its members (via action alert) to contact their Members of Congress and ask them to pass health reform.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT

- There is continued support for the ABLE Act and future meetings with key Hill staff will be arranged through CPSD. The ABLE Act would allow individuals with disabilities or their family, to create an "Able Account" where they would be able to save money to pay for disability related expenses such as personal care, education, etc. This money would not be counted towards asset limits, jeopardizing an individual's ability to keep Medicaid, SSI, etc.

- There is no current update as to the status of the Tsongas bill (would increase the asset limit for individuals on SSI).

CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDANCE:

APSE signed-on to the following letters:

- * "Coalition to End the Two-Yr. Wait for Medicare" letter regarding affordability provisions for Medicare in health reform.
- * Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) letter calling for the continued inclusion of LTSS in health reform.
- * CCD letter calling for the House's version of Medicaid reimbursement in health reform.
- * AFL-CIO letter calling for an extension of FMAP funding.