



UPDATE FROM WASHINGTON

AS OF: 12/30/2009

Hello Legislative Liaisons and Chapter Presidents,

This is your third official *Update from Washington*! Similar to the previous *Update*, I have condensed my notes from the various meetings to give you a simpler picture of what has been happening on a national level.

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,

Stephanie Birmingham
Public Policy Associate
APSE

EMPLOYMENT/TRANSITION:

- Through the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities there is discussion as to what the role of ODEP (Office of Disability Employment Policy) shall be. Reauthorization of ODEP will be coming up soon.

- U.S. DOL, ODEP and the NTAR Leadership Center co-sponsored a roundtable discussion on “Strategies for Including People with Disabilities in the Green Jobs Talent Pipeline”. To read Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Kathy Martinez’s remarks on the roundtable, visit http://www.dol.gov/odep/media/speeches/20091216_GREEN.htm.

HEALTHCARE:

- December 11th, 2009 Stephanie attended a press conference held by Senate leaders re: the CLASS Act. (See website for article)

- Senate passed its version of the health care reform bill on Christmas Eve day (12/24/2009).

-Discussions will begin soon between House and Senate leaders in an effort to combine both bills into a final health care reform package that will be presented to President Obama for signing.

CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDANCE:

- APSE signed onto the following letters: AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) Fiscal Relief letter; American Heart Association health reform letter.

- In addition to co-signed letters, APSE is listed as a CLASS Act supporter in an in ad *Roll Call*.

- APSE participated in two meetings (through CPSD) with staff from representatives Jim McDermott (D-WA) and John Tanner's (D-TN) offices to encourage support for the ABLE Act.

- Laura attended a meeting (through CPSD) with Sharon Lewis and Kim Betz to discuss WIA Reauthorization and Employment First.

- APSE is in the process of drafting our own individual reauthorization recommendation letters regarding both WIA and the Rehab Act to be sent to appropriate Congressional members. We would like input from our membership – so if you have thoughts, please contact Stephanie.

TERMS:

Rehab Act: According to the Department of Education, “The Rehabilitation Act is the Federal legislation that authorizes the formula grant programs of vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, independent living, and client assistance.” (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/reg/narrative.html>)

WIA: Workforce Investment Act is designed to further enhance vocational rehabilitation services and other employment services provided to individuals with and without disabilities. It was signed into law in 1998. (<http://www.doleta.gov/USWORKFORCE/WIA/Runningtext2.htm>)

ABLE Act: The ABLE Act will allow for the creation of ‘Able Accounts’ for individuals with disabilities. These accounts will allow individuals to save their earnings without being penalized with regard to Medicaid and other means-tested programs. The money would be able to be used for things such as medical care, employment supports, education, transportation, and certain life necessities. (<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1205>)