



UPDATE FROM WASHINGTON

AS OF: 2/28/2010

Hello Legislative Liaisons and Chapter Presidents,

This is your fifth 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 are starting to pick up again, now that Congress is back in session. 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 Spring,

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.

- APSE has been a part of conversations between various disability constituency groups regarding 14(c). However, as of now it has been difficult to find consensus and it is APSE's belief that it is important to call for phase-out despite the difficulty in garnering support among all members of the disability policy community.

HEALTHCARE:

Healthcare stills seems to be at an unfortunate standstill. APSE still supports

comprehensive health care reform and encourages its members to continue to be in contact with their Members of Congress and ask them to pass health reform.

Key issues to consider:

- Insurance Wellness Programs may be discriminatory to individuals with disabilities who are unable to meet program requirements. As a result, individuals may be penalized (Ex. have to pay higher premium). While not all wellness programs operate the same way and most claim to be voluntary, the implications of not meeting their goals tends to leave individuals with disabilities no alternative.

- Pre-Existing Conditions has been a way for insurance companies to deny persons with disabilities coverage. The prohibition of denying coverage or exorbitant costs to those with pre-existing conditions will mean that individuals with disabilities will have the ability to obtain affordable health care coverage.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT

- There is continued support for the ABLE Act and advocates are working to garner more co-sponsors on both the House and Senate sides. 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 has not signed-on to or sent any letters recently. However, be sure to check online on the Public Policy webpage, "Congressional Correspondence" to see copies of letters co-signed by APSE or sent on behalf of APSE.