



EMPLOYMENT FIRST - EMPLOYMENT NOW

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

“All Legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.”

(Article I, Section 1, of the [United States Constitution](#))

Section Overview

Before getting started, it is important to fully understand the legislative process. Although the United States Congress considers thousands of bills each session, only a very small percentage will ever make it to the president’s desk for final approval or veto. Before reaching the White House, bills must go through a variety of committees and subcommittees, debates, and amendments in both chambers of Congress.

Disability Rights Timeline

Please view the link from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Independent Living Management for a select list of national and international milestones highlighting people, events and legislation that effect disability rights: <http://bit.ly/1eTalRV>

Key Federal Laws Impacting the Disability Community

There has been significant progress and increased opportunities for people with disabilities through the disability rights movement. For more information on landmark legislation that has created meaningful change for people with disabilities and opened doors to employment opportunities please view the Arc’s guide to “Where Your Rights Come From” found at: <http://bit.ly/MeEAMr>

Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act has provided great opportunity by making it illegal for employers discriminate based on disability. The ADA Employment Pocket Toolkit can be a good resource. It can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1eQNW9X>

Importance of Understanding the Process

Understanding the legislative process is a crucial component of being an effective advocate for Employment First policies and practices. Both advocacy and lobbying are effective way to create awareness about how a community is impacted by public policy. However, there is an important distinction between the two that is helpful to understand. The Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest clarifies by stating:

“When nonprofit organizations advocate on their own behalf, they seek to affect some aspect of society, whether they appeal to individuals about their behavior, employers about their rules, or the government about its laws. Lobbying refers specifically to advocacy efforts that attempt to influence legislation. This distinction is helpful to keep in mind because it means that laws limiting the lobbying done by nonprofit organizations do not govern other advocacy activities”.

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CRS Report: Lobbying Congress- an Overview of Legal Provisions and Congressional Ethics Rules - See more at: <http://1.usa.gov/1faBYbB>

The key to influencing public policy is to build relationships with elected officials in order to educate and influence their viewpoints on critical issues and legislation.

Federal Government

The United States Congress is the bicameral (two legislative chambers) legislature of the federal government of the United States of America, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each Congress lasts two years and is comprised of two sessions. On January 2014, the 112th Congress convened its second session.

Both US Senators and Representatives, make up the US Congress, and are chosen through direct election. Each of the 435 members of the House of Representatives represents a federal district in a state and serve two-year terms. House seats are apportioned among the states by population. In contrast, the 100 Senators serve six-year terms. Each state has two senators, regardless of population.

State Government

As you know, individual states are commonly faced with legislation that may have an important positive or negative impact on the future of integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Every state except Nebraska has a bicameral legislature, which means the state legislature consists of two separate chambers. In all bicameral legislatures, the smaller chamber is called the Senate and is usually referred to as the upper house.

Find out more information about your state legislature: <http://bit.ly/1h181gh>

House and Senate Committees

The House and Senate each divide the issues they work on among committees of jurisdiction. These committees decide which bills and resolutions move forward to consideration by the House and Senate as a whole. Committee chairmen have enormous influence over this process. In terms of disability employment, the major committees with jurisdiction are the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Although anyone may draft a bill, only members of Congress can introduce legislation, and by doing so become the bill's sponsor(s). There are four basic types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions. The official legislative process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered, referred to a committee and printed by the Government



Printing Office. “H.R.” signifies a House bill and “S” a Senate bill. Useful resources to learn more include:

- APSE Fact Sheet – How a Bill Becomes a Law <http://bit.ly/1dS6V6x>
- MT NP How a Bill Becomes Law in Montana (relevant to other states) <http://bit.ly/LPtVbU>, pp. 20-22
- Watch a video from the Library of Congress about the Legislative Process <http://1.usa.gov/1jdcn4L>

The Role of APSE

APSE plays an important role as the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. APSE speaks as a unified voice in the Employment First movement representing human service professionals, people with disabilities, educators, employers, family members and other stakeholders. It is important to use this opportunity to tell your Members of Congress about the impact APSE and your state chapter has on your community, and the importance of expanding equitable employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities!

Additional Resources

- ***How Our Laws Are Made***
 - In the House: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>
 - In the Senate: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>
- ***House and Senate Floor Schedule/Calendar***
 - Currently on the House Floor: <http://clerk.house.gov/floorsummary/floor.html>
 - House Calendar: <http://1.usa.gov/1qcpTIU>
 - Senate Floor Schedule: <http://www.senate.gov/>
 - Senate Calendar: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/calendars/senate/browse.html>
- ***Legislative Contact Form***
 - Contact your Representative in the House: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>
 - Contact your Senator: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm