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MAJOR EVENTS LAST WEEK

Medicaid

The House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), held a hearing on "Medicaid's Critical Role for Americans with Disabilities." Celine Fortin, Associate Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey, testified on the harmful effect of pending Bush Administration regulations as well as the importance of the CLASS Act (S. 1758; H.R. 3001), the Community Choice Act (S.799; H.R. 1621) and the Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act (H.R. 1279). Several majority Subcommittee Members criticized the Administration's efforts to legislate by regulation. To view the archived webcast of the hearing please visit <http://energycommerce.edgeboss.net/wmedia/energycommerce/011608.he.hrg.community-disabilities.asx> or download the video file by clicking on <http://energycommerce.edgeboss.net/download/energycommerce/011608.he.hrg.community-disabilities.asf>

Social Security

The House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security held a hearing on Social Security benefits for economically vulnerable beneficiaries. Witnesses on behalf of people with disabilities discussed numerous improvements that could and should be made to the Social Security disability programs and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. Terry Moakley, Vice President for Public Affairs of the United Spinal Association, testified on behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. In addition, the hearing focused on the relationship of Social Security benefits to government pensions for retired state and local government workers. See more information on the hearing at: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=603&comm=4>

Employment

The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) released its report on the participation rate of people with targeted disabilities in the federal workforce. In addition to noting that the 2006 participation rate (0.94%) is the lowest in 20 years, the report also contains recommendations for improving the performance of the federal

government in hiring people with targeted disabilities. To view the report visit www.eeoc.gov/federal/report/pwtd.html

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, with over 100 national organizations in its membership, held its annual meeting. The agenda included the election of officers and at-large board members, adoption of the 2008 budget, and organization of task forces for the year. The DPC's Marty Ford was elected Chairperson for a second year and DPC staff members are expected to serve as co-chairs for at least 8 of the 19 task forces and to represent The Arc and UCP on many others.

MAJOR EVENTS AHEAD

U. S. Congress

With the Senate returning from its winter recess tomorrow, the 2nd Session of the 110th Congress is fully underway. Later this week, House and Senate Republicans will hold separate retreats to discuss their policy plans and tactics for this Session of Congress. It is expected that Senate Republicans will remain the key roadblock for policy initiatives that are opposed by the White House and/or the Republicans. Many pundits believe that little will be accomplished in this Session of Congress unless bipartisanship can be attained.

Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriations

The White House is still pondering what, if anything, to do about the large number of earmarks contained in the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act. Some fiscal conservatives are pressing for an Executive Order that would eliminate some of the earmarks. Other Hill Republicans oppose this maneuver, instead suggesting that the White House propose a rescission package of earmarks. An Executive Order can become effective immediately while a rescission package must be agreed to by the Congress. Few policy makers believe that the Congress would approve a rescission package.

Economic Stimulus

The Congress and the White House are trying to quickly craft a bipartisan deal to spur the economy in what may already be a recession. Among the types of spending being considered are aid to states for Medicaid, a food stamp increase, unemployment insurance expansion, new infrastructure (especially to rebuild bridges), business tax credits and a tax rebate for all taxpayers. President Bush will meet with Congressional leaders today to work on the plan. The House and Senate will hold hearings on the economy this week headlined by the Congressional Budget Office providing an analysis of the budget and economic outlook. The Senate Finance Committee will also deliberate on a stimulus package today.

Health Care

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives will vote to override President Bush's second veto of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007 (H.R. 3963). The House Democratic leadership does not expect to garner sufficient votes to override the veto.

<http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.03963:/>

Employment

DPC staff will attend a briefing on Wednesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Office of Disability Employment Policy about the long awaited inclusion of disability questions in the Current Population Survey (CPS) scheduled to begin this summer. Including these questions in the CPS will provide more information about unemployment rates of people with disabilities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jan. 23 DPC Conference Call

Due to the multiple unanticipated schedule conflicts of DPC staff that will be participating in meetings on Capitol Hill, our Wednesday, Jan 23 call will be rescheduled for Thurs, Jan 24 at 4 p.m. EST.

Disability Policy Seminar

Over 150 disability leaders have already registered for the Seminar. A better indicator of Seminar participation is the nearly sold out block of rooms at the Seminar hotel, the Hyatt Regency. Very few rooms are left and those are expected to be sold out by the end of this week. A list of alternate hotels will be posted on The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy web sites when the Hyatt rooms are no longer available. The deadline for Seminar registration without incurring a late fee is February 7. A revised Seminar programs will also be posted on the web sites later this week. All Seminar information is

available at:

<http://www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=1642&srcid=183> and http://www.ucp.org/ucp_generalsub.cfm/1/8/12477 in addition to the web pages of our Seminar partner organizations – AAIDD, AUCD, & NCADD.

Access Board Meeting

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) has established an advisory committee to make recommendations for possible revisions to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). The meeting will address accessibility guidelines to include provisions for emergency transportable housing. The meeting is scheduled for January 24 and 25, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on January 24 and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on January 25 and will be held at the Access Board's offices, 1331 F Street, NW., Suite 1000, Washington, DC. For further information, contact Marsha Mazz at Telephone number (202) 272-0020 (Voice); (202) 272-0082 (TTY) or by email at mazz@access-board.gov

Cognitive Technology Survey

The Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center of the Advancement of Cognitive Technologies (RERC-ACT) is still seeking respondents for its survey on how people with cognitive disabilities (such as intellectual disabilities, brain injury, or Alzheimer's disease) use technology. The DPC first distributed the survey link to chapters of The Arc and affiliates of UCP last fall. RERC-ACT has extended its original deadline for survey completion. The survey is available online at <http://206.188.20.148/survey/survey.php?sid=62>