**disABILITY LINK – Legislative and Public Policy Quarterly Report – July 2015**

Major Theme for 2015:

ADA 25/Disability Rights *are* Civil Rights!

**A Review of Independent Living Legislative Priorities**

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) publishes a Legislative and Advocacy Priorities Guide each year – the Guide for 2015 is available at - <http://www.ncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/PolicyPrioritiesFebruary2015-LR.pdf> - the parallel between local and national issues is clearly evident:

* Independent Living Funding and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – includes advocacy for additional funding in 2016 for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to address the additional “core” service of transition (supporting people to move back into community from nursing facilities and other institutions, and prevent people entering institutions, and facilitate youth with significant disabilities to post-secondary education life, including employment) – CILs offer highly effective and reduced cost (to tax payers) services that support the independence for people with disabilities
* Housing – support initiatives to address cross disability needs (accessible, affordable, healthy, decent, safe and integrated) – an essential element of Community Living – note, Fair Housing complaints involving people with disabilities are nearly half of all complaints
* Transportation – an economic necessity for everyone and an essential for the community integration of people with disabilities – effective solutions require the involvement and participation of the riders
* Employment and Economic Equity – priorities emphasize policy that supports career development for young people with disabilities so they do not have to live in poverty to maintain SSI benefits and health care – SSI, one of the largest federal programs, requires people to “prove” they cannot work
* Healthcare and Long Term Services and Supports – advocacy includes addressing the Medicaid Bias, with the Community First Choice Option (CFCO) – implement reform (“don’t gut”) Medicaid by expanding community based services, demedicalizing services, etc. – additionally, equal healthcare services for people with disabilities should include equal suicide prevention
* The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – celebrate by preventing any weakening of rights hard won…no limit to our civil rights – issues include the historical bias against parents with disabilities – no reduction of rights based on disability
* Accessible Technology (AT) – people with disabilities are best served by available and “affordable” hands-on exposure to mainstream and assistive technology – Universal Design (UD) means technology is inclusive and accessible
* Education – the same opportunity for students with disabilities to acquire the same knowledge and skills as peers through participation in the general curriculum and access to qualified teachers – protect students with disabilities from seclusion and restraint
* Veterans Issues – addressing the need for all veterans, and their families, to access services and benefits in the most consistent, effective and efficient manner – continue the efforts for collaboration with CILs
* The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – continued call for ratification – requires the continued collaboration of veteran, business, faith and civil rights communities

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