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

**October 2016 – Current Issues**

You will probably recognize these issues being addressed by disABILITY LINK, Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and the Independent Living (IL) movement, as these are *ongoing* efforts – the consumers, volunteers and staff of disABILITY LINK are involved in advocacy in topics including….

**ABLE Act** – since the passing of the ABLE Act in 2014 (and 2016 in Georgia), which recognizes the additional costs associated with living with a disability, and allows eligible people to save funds in a tax exempt account while remaining eligible for federal public benefits such as SDSI and SSDI - there are several efforts to increase eligibility, for example, by extending the age 26 to 46, by allowing rollover from college saving plans, and by including people working and earning (<http://www.ablenrc.org/news/able-act-now-law-georgia>)

**Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD)** – the US has yet to ratify the convention, ratification is through the US Senate, note…one third of the senators are up for re-election in November 2016, including Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – this provides an opportunity to expand education on the importance of the treaty to promote disability rights worldwide (<http://usicd.org/template/page.cfm?id=221>)

**Disability Integration Act (DIA)** – while the Olmstead Decision does require community integration in long term support services (LTSS), the DIA addresses injustices of access to community based services by clarifying in statue the right to choice, assures states and all LTSS funders provide maximum control of services to consumers, establishes planning requirements with benchmarks, requires provision of housing, and establishes strong and targeted enforcement mechanisms (<http://www.disabilityintegrationact.org/>)

**Get Out the Vote** – the media is full of ideas and information about the upcoming elections, but less so about the disability community and voting – efforts center around, (a) registration, (b) voting and accessibility, (c) issues – voters want to know more about the candidates and referendum topics, and the disability community wants candidates to understand the issues that impact people with disabilities – recent efforts include sharing the content of the recent Pew Research on disability and voting (<http://www.advocacymonitor.com/action-alert-historic-disability-report-share-with-local-media/>), and working to include a question about disability in the Presidential debates (How would you value disability rights in your presidency?)

**Housing** – Shut Out, Priced Out and Segregated: The Need for Fair Housing for People with Disabilities was published in August 2011, it is a comprehensive report of public policy and the housing issues of the cross disability community of Georgia with detailed recommendations…over 5 years later the issues remain (housing remains one of the most common Information and Referral requests) – a recently hosted Lunch and Learn is part of statewide efforts to maintain focus on a systemic approach to addressing housing issues (<http://www.silcga.org/resources/accessible-housing/>)

**Intersectionality: Race and Disability** – the disability community is a diverse “minority” and is active in being as inclusive as possible – the high number of people with disabilities (in particular African American men with disabilities) involved in fatal police related shootings demands attention – actions include outreach to media, and a local collaborative approach, with other organizations active in such advocacy, reflecting NCIL’s diversity efforts (<http://www.ncil.org/about-the-ncil-diversity-committee/>) and recognition that this systemic issue will not simply be addressed by more police training

**Transportation** – the election on November 8 includes several local ballots regarding expansion of transportation options – while the Independent Living (IL) community is a supporter of personal options, concerns continue for, (1) people with disabilities who still have no access to public transportation (the majority of metro Atlanta counties – 7 of the 12 counties served by disABILITY LINK – have no public transit), and, (2) the accessibility of the public transit options, given that currently minimum accessibility standards are hardly met (<http://www.ajc.com/news/local-govt--politics/separate-transportation-taxes-nov-ballots-for-fulton-atlanta/QcqJ5tJLV1piX5PGTL4MgI/>)

The IL community holds the very important doctrine that “Disability Rights Are Civil Rights” and continues to pursue for the full social, political and economic integration of people with disabilities….the struggle continues – for more information see the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)’s Legislative and Advocacy priorities Guide <http://www.ncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Policy-Priorities-July-2016.pdf> - NCIL’s Advocacy Monitor <http://www.advocacymonitor.com/> - and, the Association of Program for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)’s Advocacy Priorities <https://www.april-rural.org/images/APRIL_Advocacy_2015.pdf> - *“If there is no struggle, there is no progress,”* Frederick Douglas (1817 – 1897)