

LOS ANGELES SELF-ADVOCACY NEWS

By And For People With Developmental Disabilities

February, 2009

Issue 7

A New President - New Hope for People with Disabilities



"We must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination... policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities."

-- Barack Obama, April 11, 2008

Barack Obama and Joe Biden have developed a list of important issues for people with disabilities that they hope to work on in the next four years.

In addition to encouraging the Senate to support the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan has four parts, designed to provide lifelong support and resources to Americans with disabilities. They are as follows:

First, provide Americans with disabilities with the **educational opportunities they need to succeed** by funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, supporting early intervention for children with disabilities and better screening, improving college opportunities for high school

graduates with disabilities, and making college more affordable. Obama and Biden will also ask for a study of students with disabilities and issues relating to transition to work and higher education.

Second, **end discrimination and promote equal opportunity** by restoring the Americans with Disabilities Act, increasing funding for enforcement, supporting the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, ensuring affordable, accessible health care for all and improving mental health care.

Third, **increase the employment rate** of workers with disabilities by putting in place regulations that require the federal government and its contractors to employ people with disabilities, providing private-sector employers with resources to accommodate employees with disabilities, and encouraging those employers to use tax benefits to hire more workers with disabilities and supporting small businesses owned by people with disabilities.

And fourth, **support independent, community-based living** for Americans with disabilities by enforcing the Community Choice Act, which would allow Americans

with significant disabilities the choice of living in their community rather than having to live in a nursing home or other institution, creating a voluntary, budget-neutral national insurance program to help adults who have or develop functional disabilities to remain independent and in their communities, and make the Social Security approval process easier .

Autism

President Obama and Vice President Biden are committed to supporting Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorders (“ASD”), their families, and their communities. There are a few key elements to their support, which are as follows:

- First, they support increased funding for autism research, treatment, screenings, public awareness, and support services. There must be research of the treatments for, and the causes of, ASD.
- Second, they support improving life-long services for people with ASD for treatments, interventions and services for both children and adults with ASD.
- Third, they support funding the Combating Autism Act and working with Congress, parents and ASD experts to determine how to further improve federal and state programs for ASD.
- Fourth, they support universal screening of all infants and re-screening for all two-year-olds, the age at which some conditions, including ASD, begin to appear. These screenings will be safe and secure, and available for every American that wants them. Screening is essential so that disabilities can be identified early enough for those children and families to get the supports and services they need.

(This information was taken from www.whitehouse.gov which lists all of President’s Obama’s proposed agendas for change.)



Fun Facts About Barack Obama’s Inauguration

Did you know.....

1.8 million people attended the ceremonies at the National Mall, according to city officials

1.544 million people travelled on the Metro subway in Washington, D.C

14,750 pounds of pasta were served at the six official Inaugural balls held at the Washington Convention Center

The average hotel room rate in D.C. on January 19th and 20th was \$600

There were no arrests on Inauguration Day, according to city officials.

What a historic event it was!

This information was taken from:
<http://www.examiner.com/x-1005-DC-Tourism-Examiner~y2009m2d9-Fun-facts-from-Obamas-inauguration>



California's Budget Crisis



Everyone is concerned about the economy and how it will affect us. It is important to understand the Governor's proposed budget reductions for California for the next year. As of this writing, no definite decision has been made about the exact amount of the budget cuts. However, the 5 things proposed by the Governor that will most impact people with developmental disabilities are:

- 1) Regional Centers -
 - An overall budget cut of \$100 to 300 million;
 - Cuts to rates made to most regional center providers;
 - Cuts to regional center operations (staff)
- 2) In Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
 - Eliminating hours for many people for things like preparing meals, food shopping, laundry, and cleaning;
 - Decrease IHSS workers' wages to the state minimum wage; and
 - Have a 'share of cost' for some people, meaning you pay part of the cost
- 3) Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Stopping the state cost of living increase
- 4) Health Care Services and Medi-Cal
 - Eliminating services such as dental, optometry, audiology, psychology, and incontinence creams
 - Changing eligibility for Medi-Cal so that fewer people qualify for services
 - Increasing costs for program participants in the Aged, Blind, and Disabled program.
- 5) Education
 - Cuts to general education, which is likely to affect some students with disabilities.

What You Can Do

- 1) Call your state Assembly Member and state Senator, especially if they are Republican. Tell them how the budget proposals will affect you. Give examples. You can find out who your legislators are by calling 1-800-815-2666
- 2) Visit your state legislators' offices. Call and set up an appointment to meet with them or their staff in their local offices.
- 3) Write a letter or call Governor Schwarzenegger:
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitor Building
Sacramento, CA. 95814
Phone: 916-445-2841; Fax: 916-445-4633
- 4) Write letters to the editors of your local newspapers.
- 5) Pass this information along to your friends and family.
- 6) Keep informed and up to date. Two helpful websites are: www.cdcan.us and <http://www.dds.ca.gov/ConsumerCorner/Home.cfm>

Dear Aggie!



HAPPY NEW YEAR, EVERYONE. I hope every one of you had a safe holiday season. Now it's time to start thinking of New Year's resolutions for 2009.

Here is a list of some common New Year's resolutions that people make:

- Go on a diet and lose some weight
- Get a better job
- Work harder to be a better advocate
- Get into an exercise routine
- Attend religious services more often
- Get more involved in the community and in helping out those in need
- Save money and don't spend it foolishly.

So I ask: How many people will keep their New Year's resolutions and who will break them?

If you made a New Year's resolution this year, I wish you good luck with it. It's not easy. Write and tell me how you are doing with it. I would be happy to give you tips to keep going.

From, *Aggie*

(Aggie is our columnist who will answer your questions about rights and self-advocacy in each newsletter. Address your letters to: Aggie, Self-Advocacy Board, at the address on the right.)

The Right to Love -Editorial By Tom Fambro



Everybody has the right to love and marry. Nobody should go through this life alone unless they decide for themselves they want to.

But for disabled people, marrying can cause financial suicide because their benefits are either cut or stopped altogether. If a disabled adult is receiving Social Security from a deceased parent's account, his or her benefits are stopped completely upon marriage. A disabled person receiving SSI will have his or her benefits reduced; therefore a disabled couple may live together but not marry, in order to maintain their benefits.

A married couple can only have three thousand dollars in savings to receive SSI. This must change. Nobody should have to live in poverty because they dare to love and want to spend a life together.

SSI benefits should increase with marriage. Until this becomes a reality, it is as if disabled people are being punished for marrying. This needs to change.

Los Angeles Self-Advocacy News is published three times a year by the Self-Advocacy Board of Los Angeles County with help from Area Board 10. Our officers are: President – Daniel Redmond; Vice-President – Colette Madore; Secretary – Carmen Redmond; Treasurer – Dennis O'Brien; Sergeant-at-Arms – Tom Fambro. You are invited to send articles, stories, or letters by May 1 for our June issue. Send them to: Self-Advocacy Board, 411 N. Central Ave., Suite 620, Glendale, CA. 91203. Phone: 818-543-4631. Email: sablac@earthlink.net (We will do our best, but we cannot guarantee that we will have space to include all materials sent to us.)

Self-Advocacy Group

Spotlight



In this issue, we are featuring the “Consumer Council” at Community Rehabilitation Training Center (CRTC). This group has been meeting for over 14 years and is a model for teaching self-advocates how to represent other self-advocates.

The Consumer Council is a group of 5 members and 2 alternates who are elected by all the workshop participants every November after two months of campaigning. They use numbered photographs to help people identify who they want to vote for on their ballot. Once elected, they do not have official officers, but do a great job of governing themselves.

The focus of the group is for members to talk to their fellow workers about issues that concern them and then bring those issues to the monthly Council meetings. From this process over the years, the group has made suggestions and changes regarding equipment, jobs, events, safety, and environmental matters.

Through their advocacy, they have been successful in getting new chairs at the workshop, in collecting soda cans and deciding how the money they earn from this will be spent, and in making the decisions about what food will be served at their holiday party, among other things. Their facilitator, Jude Ruda, explains that many of these decisions used to be made by staff, but now what the Council members do “encompasses the whole operation.”

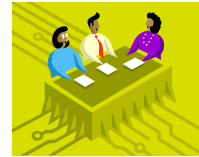
These Council members also help people with their lunches, they teach others to use the microwave, they have

developed a color-coding system for the use of the refrigerators, they lead a very successful canned food drive, and they write letters to legislators on important topics that affect their lives.

Jude describes the group as “not traditional; they are much more than a group that meets once a month; they make things better for the clients which makes things better for the staff too.”

CRTC also conducts a 13-week class on self-advocacy called “Speak Out.” For more information, contact Jude at 626-966-4438 or jccrtc@msn.com

Inclusion Conference



Area Board 10, the Inclusion Institute, and the 7 L.A. County Regional Centers are sponsoring "An Inclusive Life 2009," a one day conference for people with developmental disabilities, their families, friends, and professionals who support them. It will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at the California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities from 8 AM to 4:30 PM. Topics will include Promoting Relationships, Transition to Adult Life, Employment and Micro-Enterprise, among others. Cost is \$50 to \$100. Contact Area Board 10 at 818-543-4631 for more information.

Next Self-Advocacy Board Meeting

Everyone is welcome to join us!

February 28, 2009

12:00 to 3:00 PM

Denny's Restaurant

10700 Jefferson Blvd. (corner of Overland)

Culver City, CA. 90230

For information, call 818-543-4631



New Training Available for Your Self-Advocacy Groups!

The Self-Advocacy Board of Los Angeles County has put together a new training called “10 Things Every Regional Center Client Should Know.”

Over the years, we have learned that many self-advocates don't know that: you can ask for an IPP any time; you should not sign your IPP until you agree with it; the regional center should have someone who is authorized to approve funding at your IPP meeting.

We would love to come to your group and share this and lots more important information with you! Call us at 818-543-4631 to arrange for this training.

In Memory



We are sad to report that Donald Roberts, a self-advocacy leader in Stockton, California passed away on January 11, 2009. Donald worked hard to improve services for people with disabilities and was on many boards and committees, including Valley Mountain Regional Center, Self-Advocacy Council VI, and the California Memorial Project. He even considered a run for Mayor of Stockton. Much of his passion came from his experiences living at Stockton Developmental Center. He is survived by his wife, Krisi Franzone, as well as his parents, siblings, nieces and nephews.

Self-Advocacy Leaders You Should Know

We would like to introduce you to four self-advocates in the Los Angeles area who are available to assist you with your groups and to help you advocate for your rights.

KEITH BONCHEK was recently hired by People First of California to be the Southern California Outreach Leader. His job is to help new groups get started and spread the People First message that “we are people first; our disabilities are second”. Our movement has lots of power to improve things. He can be reached at 818-983-7583 or email: keith@keithbonchek.com

MARIA MARQUEZ and SCOTT BARRON are Peer Self-Advocates at Disability Rights California's (formerly Protection and Advocacy, Inc.) Peer Self-Advocacy Unit's new Los Angeles office. They can provide trainings on many issues including rights, housing, and self-directed services. They can be reached at 213-427-8747 x3679.

WESLEY WITHERSPOON is the Consumer Advocate at the USC UCEDD (Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities). He enjoys speaking to groups and does trainings on voting rights and abuse prevention, among others topics. He can be reached at 323-361-6688.