



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**Autism Task Force
Annual Report for 2011**

2011 ACTIVITIES

The CCD Autism Task Force met on an ad hoc basis. The task force's primary agenda was to work with Congress to reauthorize the Combating Autism Act that was set to expire on September 30, 2011. The task force supported draft legislation in both chambers that would have expanded the law to include service provisions for youth and adults on the spectrum. However, advocates met with stiff resistance in both chambers to any increase in authorization for appropriations. Finally, in May House and Senate sponsors were only able to get bipartisan agreement on a bill to simply extend the law with no changes and no increases in funding levels. Separate bills to provide services were introduced but without bipartisan support.

The House bill (H.R. 2005), introduced on May 26, 2011, was sponsored by Reps. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA) and eventually garnered 100 bipartisan co-sponsors. The Senate bill (S. 1094) was sponsored by Sens. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Mike Enzi (R-WY), along with Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Scott Brown (R-MA). The Senate bill ultimately gained 38 bipartisan co-sponsors.

The House leadership continued to provide resistance to even a simple reauthorization. To help educate Members of Congress about the need to reauthorize the law, Autism Task Force co-chairs (with the help of the DD Task Force) coordinated two rounds of Hill visits with the House Energy and Commerce and Senate HELP Committees throughout the spring and summer. Task Force leaders also met with members of the Administration as well as House and Senate leadership. The Task Force also developed several press releases and sign on letters to Committee members in support of the reauthorization.

Finally, on September 20, 2011, the House passed the bill via the consent calendar. However, several Senators then put a last minute hold on the bill. Intense "grass-tops" advocacy ultimately helped to overcome the filibuster and on September 26, 2011 the Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent.

On September 30 (the same day the law was set to expire) President Obama signed the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011 (CARA, P.L. 112-32), ensuring the continuation of important research, early identification and professional training under the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (CAA, P.L. 109-416). CARA is a clean reauthorization, simply extending funding for the CAA's programs for an additional three years at current (fiscal year 2011) funding levels.

In short, the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011 amends the Public Health Service Act to extend and reauthorize through FY2014: (1) the surveillance and research program for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities; (2) the education, early detection, and intervention program for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities; and (3) the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee. The Act authorizes \$693 million over the 2012-2014 period for autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities research, screening, treatment and education. Following is a summary of the major provisions of the Combating Autism Act of 2006, which are reauthorized and extended by the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Autism Task Force will continue to work toward to increase the availability of services and supports for children and adults with autism and monitor the implementation of the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act.

CO-CHAIRS IN 2011:

Kim Musheno, Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Katy Beh Neas, Easter Seals

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