



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

Employment and Training Task Force

2011 Annual Report

The Employment and Training Task Force had a busy, albeit frustrating year, with considerable discussions concerning employment of people with disabilities with Congressional and Administration representatives but little actual progress made in advancing such efforts. Several job training and workforce development programs were targeted for significant reductions in their budgets if not outright elimination and many employment programs for people with disabilities are likely to suffer further cuts under the sequestration that is now set for implementation on January 1, 2013.

Task force representatives met early in the year with officials of the Social Security Administration (SSA) to discuss the agency's proposal for a Work Incentives Simplification Plan to make it easier for beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to go to work. Letters opposing budget cuts in Projects with Industry and Supported Employment were delivered to the chairman and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. Also during the spring, the task force cochairs joined with the cochairs for the Social Security Task Force at a meeting with Kareem Dale and Jeff Crowley, advisors to the President for disability policy, to discuss the impact of deficit reduction proposals on people with disabilities.

In early April, the task force met with Assistant Secretary Kathy Martinez of the Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy [ODEP] for an update on various initiatives undertaken by that office. Several members of the task force participated later that month in an employment summit co-hosted by the World Institute on Disability, Mathematica and National Council on Independent Living.

During the year, the task force sought opportunities to remind Congress and the Administration of the critical need to include people with disabilities in any major employment programs and initiatives. In March and again in September, the task force submitted statements for the record to HELP Committee hearings on initiatives to increase employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. In May, the task force asked Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to target specifically individuals with disabilities in the newly created Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF). In the summer, the task force sent a letter to the President urging him to identify people with disabilities as a key component of the jobs plan

he announced in September. And in October, the task force wrote to the entire House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training reminding them to consider the needs of people with disabilities in their development of Workforce Investment Act reauthorization measures. Although people with disabilities were specifically included in the targeting lists for WIF funding, other than the hearings before the HELP Committee, the overall response by Congress and the Administration to addressing employment of people with disabilities as a priority was disappointing.

The task force spent a great deal of time in June developing recommendations on a Senate discussion draft for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Rehabilitation Act. Although markup of that bill was promised within weeks of the publication of the draft, there is still no movement in either the Senate or House on reauthorization of WIA.

The task force co-chairs met with staff for the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee in September regarding several expiring provisions under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TTWWIIA). A follow up letter was sent to the chairs and ranking members of that subcommittee as well as the Human Resources Subcommittee urging them to reauthorize the Protection and Advocacy Program for Beneficiaries of Social Security [PABSS] and the Work Incentives Planning Assistance Program [WIPA]. PABSS and WIPA are currently forward funded through September 2012 and June 2012 respectively although they were not reauthorized.

In 2012, the task force plans further engagement with Congress and the administration on addressing the employment needs of people with disabilities. Plans are underway to develop a set of proposals based on existing recommendations from this task force as well as the Social Security Task Force that can be used in meetings with Congressional staff and administration officials responsible for workforce development programs.

Should there be movement on WIA and the Rehabilitation Act reauthorization, the task force will follow actions concerning their renewal to ensure that its recommendations are considered and included in any final measures. The task force will also be commenting on the recently issued notice of proposed rulemaking on the Section 503 federal contracting regulations by the Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs. Conversations will continue with officials with the SSA Office of Employment Security Programs on Social Security work incentives.

Given the prospect of increasing Congressional attention to the SSDI trust fund and removing barriers to work for SSDI and SSI beneficiaries, the task force expects to work jointly with the Social Security task force in anticipating and responding to legislative proposals that may arise. The task force continues to have concerns that implementation of the Affordable Care Act may adversely affect working people with disabilities and is in ongoing dialogue with the Health Task Force about the most productive means of addressing those misgivings.

Co-chairs:

Cheryl Bates-Harris, National Disability Rights Network

Alicia Epstein, NISH

Susan Goodman, National Down Syndrome Congress and APSE

Charlie Harles, International Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America