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Figure 1: Graphic of RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities logo

The Electoral Process & Polling Places: Ensuring Access for All

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities is the state's sole designated recipient of the United States Department of Human Services – **Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** Election Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities State Grants.

Polling places are required to be accessible to all voters. Our program intends to ensure that each person with disabilities can vote, in private and independently. To make sure all polling places and voting equipment are accessible, the staff inspects every polling place, identifying barriers and recommending reasonable solutions, prior to Election Day. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) checklist is used to determine if polling places are accessible. The checklist provides guidelines for evaluating the physical accessibility of polling places including getting to the polling place, entering the polling place and using the voting area.

On this past Election Day, 20 volunteer polling place monitor/surveyors hit the streets and surveyed over 250 polling places (more than half of the total opened locations). Each monitor was to complete a written survey highlighting major points of accessibility. Any and all issues with parking, signage, exterior & interior routes, accessible voting equipment operation and privacy were documented and reported to the local boards of canvassers and the RI Board of Election for same-day repair. 128 issues were quickly identified and documented throughout the day. Most were resolved on-site with the aide of the poll warden/moderator. Most of the issues identified on-site were not structural, but procedural and directional based. The use of non-traditional entrances and pathways cause many issues for voters (with and without disabilities) that are unfamiliar with the polling sites. Many of these entrances require temporary disability parking places and signage to direct voters to areas normally not visited by the public. Furthermore, the AutoMark accessible voting equipment has also become increasingly problematic over the years. Several calibration, operation and functionality issues were reported throughout the Election Day inspections. The EAC Committee, RI Board of Elections and the RI Secretary of State's Office will be looking into updating the equipment with better more reliable technology.

During this past summer, the RIGCD staff and HAVA intern inspected ALL of the 400+ polling places and repaired most of the issues prior to the election. During the Election Day inspections, over 198 polling places (opened/inspected on Election Day) had no issues. The RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities Election Assistance Committee continues to coordinate with the RI Board of Elections and local board of canvasser's to eradicate all aspects of in-accessibility in the voting process. For more information on voting awareness and accessibility visit our new website at

www.gcd.ri.gov.

Little Heroes Has Big Dreams

When Erik and Dawn Denault began volunteering for Hasbro Children's Hospital's Annual Gala over a decade ago, it was out of the goodness of their hearts. They had no idea that years later, their third and youngest child would be diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder, and would have need of the same hospital they had supported for years. Danica Denault, now 3 years old, was diagnosed as a newborn with Aicardi Syndrome, a disorder that affects only females and can cause more than 40 seizures a day. Despite predictions that she would never be able to eat, walk, or breathe on her own, Danica has defied the odds, able to attend Meeting Street School and to breathe without assistance. Her parents give credit to the amazing care that she received at several hospitals, particularly Hasbro, as well as their incredible support system. Inspired by Danica, and with the realization that everyone is not able to access the same care or lucky enough to have an extremely dedicated support system, they founded Little Heroes. A non-profit organization, Little Heroes aspires to provide physical therapy equipment to parents and children in need. Knowing the difference that a Physical Therapist can make, they hope to one day be able to provide financial assistance, as well as to invest in a facility that offers on-site physical therapy sessions. Thanks to their fundraising efforts, including their annual Motorcycle Run, they have already been able to provide equipment to families in need. For more information, contact Erik and Dawn Denault at littleheroesfund@hotmail.com or (401) 243-4733.

Senate Rejects Treaty to Protect Disabled Around the World

The Senate has failed to ratify an international treaty intended to protect the rights of those with disabilities, as a bloc of conservatives opposed the treaty believing it could interfere with U.S. law. The Senate voted 61 to 38 to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, a tally that fell short of the two-thirds needed to sign on to an international treaty. The 2006 treaty, which forbids discrimination of the disabled, has enjoyed bipartisan support. Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the treaty would encourage other nations to develop the kind of protections the United States adopted 22 years ago with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Workforce Recruitment Program

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) is a free resource through which private businesses and federal agencies nationwide can identify qualified temporary and permanent candidates from a variety of professional fields. Applicants are highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates eager to prove their abilities in the workforce. The program offers employers access to candidates across the nation, the ability to source candidates who are veterans, information about each applicant's qualifications, and flexibility in hiring for internships or permanent positions. The program is run through the Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN). More information can be found at www.askearn.org.

Senate Rejects Treaty to Protect Disabled Around the World

Continued from page 2

The international treaty's thrust, he said, was a message: "Be more like us." But the treaty has split Republicans. Among its most vocal supporters were Republican war veterans, including President George H.W. Bush and former senator Bob Dole, who was injured in World War II and made a rare return to the Senate floor Tuesday to observe the vote and lend his stature.

Other conservatives were deeply suspicious of the United Nations, which would oversee treaty obligations. Those who opposed the treaty included former senator and Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum, the father of a developmentally disabled child who had traveled to Capitol Hill last week to encourage fellow Republicans to vote no. He and other conservatives argued that the treaty could relinquish U.S. sovereignty to a U.N. committee charged with overseeing a ban on discrimination and determining how the disabled, including children, should be treated. They particularly worried that the committee could violate the rights of parents who choose to home school their disabled children. "This is a direct assault on us," Santorum said.

Nations that have signed on to the treaty include China, Iran and Syria. Opponents said that American approval might give the impression that the United States accepts how those nations treat their disabled citizens. "The hard reality is that there are nation-states, like China, who do like to sign up to these organizations and gain the reputation for doing good things while, in fact, not doing good things," said Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) Supporters dismissed those fears as paranoid, noting that the treaty would change nothing in U.S. law without further approval from Congress. "With these provisions, the United States can join the convention as an expression — an expression — of our leadership on disability rights without ceding any of our ability to decide for ourselves how best to address those issue in our law," said Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.).

The risk of rejection grew after Santorum and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) announced that they had gathered the signatures of 36 fellow Republicans on a letter opposing the adoption of the measure during this month's lame-duck session. But its proponents had pushed forward in hopes of peeling off a handful of Republican opponents. Senators were greeted this week near their basement subway by veterans and others in wheelchairs who pushed for support. In deference to the solemnity of the vote, Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) asked that senators cast their votes while seated at their desks — a rare move to observe the chamber's formal rules that require each senator to respond to the clerk's announcement of their name with an "aye" or "no." In practice, senators usually vote by giving a signal to the clerk — sometimes a thumbs up or down.

Article written by Rosalind S. Helderman and published in the Washington Post on December 4th, 2012

Diabetic-Friendly Chocolate Cheesecake

Ingredients:

- Crust:**
1/2 cup finely ground almonds
- Cheesecake:**
- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 3 packages (8 oz. each) reduced fat cream cheese, softened | 2 egg whites |
| 1 ¼ cups Equal Spoonful or Granulated sweetener | 1/4 teaspoon salt |
| 2 eggs | 1 cup reduced fat sour cream |
| 4 oz. (4 squares) semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled | 2 teaspoons vanilla |
| Fresh raspberries, optional | Fresh mint, optional |

Directions:

1. For crust, spray bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Sprinkle almonds over bottom, patting gently onto pan; set aside.
2. For cheesecake, beat cream cheese and Equal in a mixing bowl on medium speed until smooth and well combined. Mix in eggs, egg whites, and salt. Fold in sour cream and vanilla until combined. Gently mix in chocolate until blended. Pour batter over crust.
3. Bake in a preheated 325°F oven for 40-45 minutes or until center of cheesecake is almost set. Cool on wire rack. Gently run metal spatula around rim of pan to loosen cake. Let cheesecake cool completely. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. To serve, remove side of pan. Garnish top of cheesecake with fresh raspberries or mint, if desired.

Serves 16

Exchanges: ½ milk, 3 fat



Happy Holidays

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

The Nutcracker

The timeless holiday classic *The Nutcracker* will be performed at the Providence Performing Arts Center from December 14th-16th. A magical reproduction of the familiar tale of Clara and her Prince, *The Nutcracker* ballet is based on the story "*The Nutcracker and the King of Mice*" by E.T.A. Hoffman. With beautiful sets, elegant choreography, and world class dancers, this ballet is sure to lighten your holiday season. For more information, contact the Providence Performing Arts Center at (401) 421-ARTS.

Newsletter

Winter 2012

| ~ December 2012 ~ | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| | | | | | | 1 AIDS Awareness Day |
| 2 | 3 International Day of Disabled Persons Executive Committee 5-7 PM | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day RICJ Holiday Potluck 6 PM (80 Washington Street) | 8 Hanukah begins at sundown |
| 9 | 10 Human Rights Day Legislation Committee 3-4:30 PM | 11 | 12 Disability Business Enterprise Committee | 13 RICDHH Annual Coffee Hour 5-8 PM (82 Smith Street) | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 First Day of Winter |
| 23 | 24 | 25 Christmas Day | 26 Kwanzaa begins | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 New Year's Eve | Notes: | | | | |

Newsletter

Winter 2012

| ~ January 2013 ~ | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|-----|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| | | 1 New Year's Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 Executive Committee 4-5:30 PM | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 Legislation Committee 3-4:30 PM | 15 | 16 | 17 Election Assistance Committee 2-3:30 PM | 18 | 19 |
| 20 Inauguration Day | 21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 Mahayana World Leprosy Day | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | Notes: | |

Newsletter

Winter 2012

| ~ February 2013 ~ | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| | | | | | 1 National Wear Red Day | 2 Groundhog Day |
| 3 Super Bowl | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 Chinese New Year | 11 Legislation Committee 3-4:30 PM | 12 | 13 Disability Business Enterprise Committee 9-10:30 AM | 14 Valentine's Day Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 Presidents' Day Commission Meeting 5-6:30 PM | 19 | 20 | 21 Employment Committee 9:30-11 AM | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 Accessibility Committee 2-3:30 PM | 26 | 27 | 28 | Notes: | |