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February 14, 2014



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

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VOR and YOU

1. Be a Sponsor! Get a Sponsor!

VOR's Annual Conference and Initiative is made possible through generous sponsorships.

If you would like to sponsor our event, or know of an individual, business or association that would like to support VOR's Mission and gain valuable recognition opportunities, check out our [sponsorship page](#) (in partnership with *EP Magazine!*).

Thank you!

2. VOR 2014 Annual Conference and Initiative Speaker Feature: William Choslovsky –Brother, Lawyer and Advocate

VOR is pleased to introduce you to [William Choslovsky](#), Esq., a featured speaker at the 2014 VOR Annual Conference on June 8, 2014 in Washington, D.C.

Bill is a partner at Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg, LLP, a Chicago law firm, where he specializes in financial restructuring and litigation. A Harvard Law School graduate (1994), Bill also clerked for two judges before starting his legal career.

Perhaps more important for our purposes, Bill's sister Stacie was born profoundly retarded and she is a resident at Misericordia, a wonderful, large private facility in Chicago.

Bill serves as a member of the Misericordia Board of Advisors and led the team of pro bono attorneys that helped secure intervention and a favorable settlement in the class action lawsuit involving all private ICFs/DD in Illinois with more than 8 residents. Due to Bill's legal representation and advocacy, residential choice was preserved for thousands of Illinoisans with

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intellectual disabilities and their families, including the choice to stay in a large facility like Misericordia. Bill, and co-counsel Scott Mendel, were recently [honored](#) for their efforts on behalf of Misericordia residents, receiving the 2014 *Sister Rosemary Connelly Service Medallion*.

Bill is back for an encore presentation, having first presented at VOR's conference in 2011. For his presentation in 2014, he will give a presentation titled, "Real choice is a two-way street, not superimposed from above: Combining common sense, law and grassroots advocacy." Bill will draw on both his experience in Ligas and his legal research since then, which will culminate in a law review article.

Bill lives in Chicago with his wife Wendy and three children. VOR is in good hands.

Are you registered yet for [VOR's Annual Conference and Initiative](#)? If not, please do so today! We'd love to have you join us.

3. Using Social Media More Effectively

Genetic Alliance * February 13, 2014 * Advocates Weekly Tip #190

Social media is a useful tool for interacting with your community. In fact, in today's world, many would say it is a necessary tool for engagement. Organizations use social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and more) as a broadcast communication tool, updating their communities and the public about progress or new developments within the organization. Need help setting up your social media accounts? Check out the online resource guide, [Getting Started with Social Media](#).

However, you shouldn't use social media just to disseminate information – use it to strategically listen to and engage with your

community. Collect their feedback and involve them in projects and outreach efforts. [Radian6](#) offers insight on how to use social media more effectively with 40 ideas for your social media plan. For example, once your social media plan is in place, be sure to time your posts for when your audience is most likely to be listening.

FEDERAL NEWS

4. H.R. 831: The Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013

In February 2013, Rep. Gregg Harper (R-MS) introduced H.R. 831, [The Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013](#).

H.R. 831 directs the Secretary of Labor (currently Tom Perez) to discontinue issuing to any new profit or non-profit or governmental entity special wage certificates (which permit individuals with disabilities, including individuals employed in agriculture, to be paid at lower than minimum wages). It would prescribe requirements for a three-year phase-out of all certificates by amending the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to repeal authority and requirements for the issuance of such certificates three years after enactment of H.R. 831, if passed, and would revoke of any certificates remaining at that time.

VOR is still considering its position on H.R. 831.

Here is one organization's statement in opposition: [Support Efforts to Expand Employment Options, Opportunities, and Informed Choice of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities](#).

Related news follows.

5. Obama to include disabled workers in

minimum wage order

USA Today * February 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — President Obama's executive order to raise the minimum wage for workers under future federal contracts includes a key provision to address concerns raised by advocates for disabled workers, according to the White House.

The president, who is set to sign the order at a ceremony in the White House East Room on Wednesday afternoon, announced his plan to take unilateral action at last month's State of the Union Address and hike the minimum wage for low-wage workers to \$10.10 from the current rate of \$7.25.

Almost immediately after announcing his plan, advocates for the physically and intellectually disabled began pressing the White House to include the group among those getting raises. Under a government program that dates back to 1938, employers could pay certain disabled workers subminimum wages — sometimes for a fraction of the prevailing minimum wage.

6. H.R. 3717: Decreases Mental Health Funding, Increases Mental Illness Funding

***The Huffington Post* * December 19, 2013 * by DJ Jaffe, Executive Director, Mental Illness Policy Organization**

Representative Tim Murphy (R., PA) introduced a bill that proposes decreasing mental health spending and increasing mental illness spending. It's a novel, thoughtful proposal that warrants serious consideration.

While up to 40 percent of Americans may have what someone defines as a mental health issue, they don't have serious mental illness. That affects a very small group (5-8 percent of

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population) and includes those with schizophrenia or treatment-resistant bipolar disorder.

Rep. Murphy proposed the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis" Act (HR 3717) to reorient the mental health system away from its focus on serving the largest numbers of the highest functioning and back towards providing treatment for the most seriously mentally ill. He reforms the bureaucracy, eliminates programs that don't help or are harmful, and invests the savings in programs known to reduce incarceration, homelessness, suicide and hospitalization in the most seriously ill.

Among other provisions, the bill seeks to improve the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, by requiring that any conferences paid for by SAMHSA, be administered by SAMHSA and any financial assistance SAMHSA provides to others be limited to evidence-based practices. It transfers some responsibilities previously assumed by SAMHSA to other more mission-focused agencies. Historically SAMHSA has given out money for conferences, trainings, and programs but exercised minimal oversight of who gets the funds or how they are spent. Many believe [SAMHSA looks the other way](#), or actively promotes the misuse of funds. As a result, funds intended to help individuals with serious mental illness receive treatment went to groups that do not even believe mental illness exists, promoters of non-evidenced based programs, harmful efforts, and efforts designed to prevent persons with serious mental illness from receiving treatment.

In addition, the bill would refocus the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Program (PAIMI). PAIMI was started with the noble purpose of providing

representation to persons with serious mental illness who were being abused by the system. Unfortunately, the program has morphed into a [political advocacy machine](#) that wants to change the system to one that assumes that almost all persons with mental illness are always well enough to make their own decisions. Rep. Murphy proposes to return PAIMI to its original focus of helping people who need help and prohibits PAIMI groups from using federal funds to lobby for other agendas.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

STATE NEWS

7. New York: Sex offenders in group homes

WHEC.com (News10NBC) * February 10, 2014

Convicted sex offenders who were living in secure facilities are being moved by the state into neighborhood group homes.

The Monroe Developmental Center, now closed, was home to people with severe developmental disabilities, including 12 individuals who are on the state sex offender registry. They are now living in group homes. People who live in those communities were never notified by the state.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

8. Kansas: State Becomes First To Outsource Disability Services

***Disability Scoop* * February 4, 2014**

KanCare is Kansas' Republican Gov. Sam Brownback's signature managed health care program for Medicaid consumers.

Starting Saturday, long-term Medicaid services for about 8.500 others with

developmental disabilities were moved into a managed care program run by private insurers. People with physical disabilities had been moved into KanCare last year when the program started.

Three companies — Amerigroup, Sunflower State Health Plan and UnitedHealthcare Community Plan — are charged with improving health outcomes while limiting the growth of health care costs.

Kansas is the first state to place its population of people with developmental disabilities with managed care companies, said Gary Blumenthal, president of the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers in Massachusetts.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

Quotable

"All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt." ~ Charles M. Schulz

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Calendar Reminders:

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

[AHCA/NCAL's fifth annual "ID/DD Residential Services Providers Hill Fly-In."](#) Questions? Dana Halvorson, dhalvorson@ahca.org.

June 8, 2014

VOR 2014 Annual Conference and Initiative:

"Making it Happen: Reforming Policy and Law in Support of Person-Centered Quality and Choice"; Hyatt Regency, Washington, D.C.

Register today!

Week of June 9, 2013

VOR 2014 Congressional Initiative: Families and advocates visit Capitol Hill.

Sunday, October 5, 2014

American Health Care Association's 2014 ID/DD Residential Services Day during AHCA/NCAL's

65th Annual Convention & Expo at the Gaylord National Harbor just outside of Washington, DC. Registration will open in Spring 2014.

Archives

***Social Media Strengths: Using Facebook and Twitter to Advance Your Cause (VOR, July 2013).** [Visit VOR's website for a copy of the powerpoint presentation and an audio of the event.](#)

*** How Congress Works Webinar: [Recorded - Listen Here.](#) Tuesday, April 23, 2013 - 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm eastern. How Congress Works: The Basics. Hosted by Peter Kinzler and Larry Innis.**

VOR
836 S. Arlington Heights Rd., #351
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Tel: (605) 399-1624
Toll Free: (877) 399-4867
Fax: (605) 399-1631
Email: info@vor.net

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