



January 16, 2015

# VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities

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## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

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**VOR Annual Conference and Congressional Initiative  
*Advocating for Choice by Expanding Opportunities*  
June 6-10, 2015  
Washington, D.C.**

**REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**

[COMPLETE DETAILS, including agenda, conference registration form, links, and hotel reservations](#)

[CONFERENCE and INITIATIVE Online Registration](#)

[HOTEL RESERVATIONS](#)

## **STATE NEWS**

**2. ILLINOIS: Murray Center Supporters Hear Good News From Governor-Elect**

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***WJBD News* \* January 12, 2014**

Governor-Elect Bruce Rauner told supporters of the Murray Development Center in a pre-inauguration stop in the Metro-East community of Maryville over the weekend that there is discussion of taking Murray off the state's closure list.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

**3. IOWA: Waiting lists for disability services continue to grow**

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***Des Moines Register* \* January 14, 2015**

Waiting lists of lowans seeking disability services have continued to grow, even as state officials start spending \$6 million that legislators authorized to pare down the lists.

The Iowa Department of Human Services said

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Wednesday that 9,479 people are now on waiting lists for special Medicaid programs to help people with mental or physical disabilities. That's an increase of more than 9 percent from the July, when the current fiscal year began.

The state agency says it has been working to add slots to the programs, which pay for services such as therapy for people with disabilities and respite care to help their families cope.

Disability-rights advocates gathered at the Statehouse to press the state to address the issue faster.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

#### **4. NEW YORK: State disabled oversight agency sued over records**

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*The Times Union (Albany, NY) \* January 10, 2015*

A federally designated protection and advocacy group that watches out for the welfare of the disabled went to federal court Friday, suing the state Justice Center over what its says is the center's refusal to hand over records.

Disability Rights NY is suing the state Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. The Justice Center, as it is known, serves as a statewide clearinghouse for complaints about abuse and neglect of people in state care or in facilities licensed by the state.

The Justice Center was set up in 2013 by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in the wake of a series by The New York Times about abuse and neglect of the disabled. The idea was to consolidate the complaints and investigations of problems at mental health, disability and other facilities.

Disability Rights NY, by contrast, provides federal rather than state advocacy, since they are empowered by Congress.

In its suit, Disability Rights says it has been unable to get complete documentation on cases of abuse

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and neglect. It cites instances in when records of various clients have been delayed or heavily redacted.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

## **5. TENNESSEE: Last large state institution for disabled to close**

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*The Tennessean* \* January 12, 2015

The state has agreed to close a 40-year-old facility in east Tennessee for people with limited mental functioning.

Under the plan, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities will shutter Greene Valley Developmental Center in Greeneville by June 30, 2016, moving the remaining 96 residents into more home-like settings integrated into neighborhoods.

The plan to close Greene Valley is part of an overall agreement submitted in federal court last week.

[Read more, COMMENT \(there is lots of misinformation in this article\) and share](#)

## **FEDERAL UPDATE**

## **6. Lawmakers Look To Improve Care For Kids With Complex Needs**

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*Disability Scoop* (reprinting article from Stateline) \*  
January 12, 2015

Finding care for children with medically complex or rare conditions can force parents to tap into networks of highly specialized physicians and hospitals scattered around the country.

This is especially challenging when the children are covered by Medicaid, because each state-run program has a different benefit package, payment structure and provider network. Conflicting regulations and paperwork requirements can delay

treatment and lead to unnecessary hospitalizations. Medicaid's state-based rules also have thwarted efforts to develop a national clinical database researchers could use to find ways to improve the care of children with rare conditions.

A new bill in Congress would amend the 50-year-old Medicaid law to make it easier for health care providers in different states to coordinate the complicated care of these kids.

The proposal — the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act — also calls for the creation of a national database of Medicaid claims data that researchers could use to study complicated conditions that affect one in 25 children nationwide.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

## **7. Social Security disability payments will be cut by a fifth if Congress doesn't act**

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*The Washington Post* \* Blog by Max Ehrenfreund \*  
January 7, 2015

On the first day of the new Congress, Republicans symbolically bound themselves to what is certain to be a controversial reform of the federal disability insurance program, which would probably occur near the height of the 2016 presidential campaign.

Social Security has two components, the disability insurance program and the much larger Old Age and Survivors Insurance program, for which almost all Americans become fully eligible when they reach retirement age. Congress has historically treated them as one system, moving money between one pot and the other if one is running short on funds and the other has plenty of money.

That's the situation now, as the disability pot is expected to be empty late next year. There is enough money in the larger pot to last until 2034, or to keep both programs solvent through 2033, according to the Social Security Administration.

On Tuesday, however, the House adopted a parliamentary rule that adds a procedural obstacle

to reallocating the money.

The effect of the rule appears to be to force Congress into a debate about Social Security next year instead of sometime before 2033. Without action from Congress, Social Security will be forced to cut disability payments to all recipients by about one fifth.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

## 8. If legal in states, feds say OK

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**Los Angeles Times \* December 16, 2014**

**Editor's Note:** *Consistent with long-held principles and mission, VOR supports the right of individuals with disabilities and their families to make informed treatment choices. We specifically take [no position](#) on the use of Cannabidiol (CBD oil) or marijuana for medical purposes, leaving that decision to the individual, her family and guardian.*

### **Excerpts**

The medical marijuana, including use of CBD oil, movement has picked up considerable momentum in recent years. The Drug Enforcement Administration, however, continues to place marijuana in the most dangerous category of narcotics, with no accepted medical use.

Congress for years had resisted calls to allow states to chart their own path. This changed with the passage of the massive spending bill. Tucked deep inside the 1,603-page federal spending measure is a provision that effectively ends the federal government's prohibition on medical marijuana and signals a major shift in policy. The measure, which forbids the federal government from using any of its resources to impede state medical marijuana laws, was previously rejected half a dozen times.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NEWS

9. Ruth Marcus (Columnist): People with mental illness need treatment, not incarceration

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*Washington Post* \* December 31, 2014

Latson should not be in prison at all.

That's not to say Latson should be free. He is, by the accounts of those who know him best, a sweet young man who nonetheless can become aggressive when agitated.

Superintendent James Whitley of the Winchester County jail took the extraordinary step of testifying on Latson's behalf at two sentencing hearings, described him as "like a child wanting to please us."

Latson should be in a secure residential treatment facility – and Virginia's mental health officials support this outcome, even as its corrections system incarcerates him.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

### **QUOTABLE**

*"If someone opens the door, walk through it."*

Cecilia G. Morris, Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York.

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Calendar Reminders:

**Tuesday, March 24, 2015:**

[American Health Care Association ID/DD Washington Fly-In](#)

Congressional speakers are being invited, a legislative update will be provided, and Hill visits will follow in the afternoon. Breakfast and a boxed lunch will be provided to you. [Registration is free but required](#). VOR members are encouraged to attend.

**Sunday, June 7, 2015:**

**VOR Annual Conference: ADVOCATING FOR CHOICE BY EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES.** [Speakers Announced. Registration details coming soon. Check VOR's website often for updates.](#)

## Archives:

\* Thursday, March 20, 2014

[VOR's "Regional Meetings: The Need for Advocates to Act Global and Local" Webinar.](#)

\***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.

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