



Employment and Training Task Force

2012 Annual Report

The Employment and Training (E and T) Task Force continues to deal with the possibility of further budget cuts that may result from deficit reduction negotiations. To date, the Projects with Industry program has been eliminated and the Supported Employment State Grant consolidated with the VR state grant program. While the unemployment rate for people with disabilities remains high, job training and workforce development programs are being reduced or are facing elimination.

Task force members have made Hill visits to Education and Workforce Committee majority staff to discuss with them their opposition to section 503 (Rehabilitation Act) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. This NPRM, which to date is not a final rule, would require federal contractors to increase the percentage of people with disabilities they employ.

We, along with the Social Security, Long Term Services and Health Task Forces also met with the majority staff of the Senate Health Education Labor Pensions (HELP) staff on the report "Unfinished Business: Making Employment of People with Disabilities a National Priority." We praised staff for their focus on integrated employment and recognition of the "employment first" initiatives throughout some of the states.

Task force members met with majority staff of the Education and Workforce Committee on the chairman's version of the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization. We expressed concern about elimination of the state VR program and were able to get that provision restored in a subsequent version of the bill.

In addition, we met with minority staff of the same House committee to discuss Workforce Investment Act reauthorization and the minority bill that was introduced by Representative George Miller. The minority bill contained many provisions that align with the ETTF Task Force principles document on reauthorization of WIA.

The cochairs met by conference call on proposed changes to the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) and its impact on employees with disabilities and sent a letter to conferees on the Postal reauthorization bill expressing concern about these provisions.

ETTF task force members have joined other co-chairs on Hill visits on the importance of Medicaid funding to support individuals with disabilities.

The Employment and Training Task Force joined with other CCD task forces or sent letters independently on the following topics:

- Extension of Work Opportunity Tax Credit in the Payroll Tax Sign-on Letter (Feb)
- Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Section 503 with Rights Task Force (Feb)
- Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)-Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) Renewal Sign-on letter (March)
- ETF and SS Task Force Joint Statement: Senate HELP Committee hearing on “Stay-at-work and Return-to-work: “Lessons from the Private Sector.” (April)
- Co-chairs letter to Chairman Kline re HR 4297, Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012 (April)
- ETTF and Social Security letter to SSA regarding WIPA-PABSS (May)
- Co-chairs letter to Education & Workforce Committee regarding HR4297 markup which resulted in a manager’s amendment to remove harmful provisions that would consolidate Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act (June)
- Co-chairs letter: FECA Reform/21st Century Postal Bill (December)

In May, staff from the Center on Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) did a presentation to the task force on the impact of managed care on Medicaid employment support services through various Medicaid waivers.

ETTF was represented at the National Governors Association (NGA) Forum on its Initiative on Employment of People with Disabilities in September. Additionally, Martin Simon from the NGA did a presentation for ETTF members in November on the work of NGA on this initiative. We forwarded information to the NGA on employment first initiatives throughout the states as a result of this meeting.

An ad hoc group of ETTF members have held several meetings to develop recommendations for a reauthorization bill for Title V – the Rehabilitation Act - of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). These efforts will likely continue through 2013.

Other plans for 2013 include pressing the administration to complete the 503 regulations, monitor progress, or lack thereof, on WIA/Rehab Act reauthorization, responding to any proposals on employment of people with disabilities issued by the HELP Committee and working with the Social Security Task Force on any initiatives concerning work incentives for beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI.

Co-chairs:

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