Minutes: AER Legislative Committee

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

In Attendance: Tony, Lou, John, Mark, Anisio, Bernadette

General theme: What can we expect from the Trump administration regarding various issues of concern to AER and the blindness community?

Question: Can we expect any recently passed regulations or legislation to be revoked (e.g., WIOA regulations on the VR Homemaker goal, integrated employment, etc.)? Possibly, but it is hard to predict. Also, the blindness community should weigh in on who might be the next RSA commissioner.

Note 1: Despite consumer organizations and blindness professionals and the RSA Commissioner on the same page, most WIOA regulations that were of concern were still implemented, meaning that we have little power or control even when fully united. Still, we have no choice but to unite when possible and speak our minds at all times on the issues.

Note 2: There will be a meeting tomorrow on the topic of the next RSA Commissioner.

Cogswell-Macy Act – We do not know what is the Sec., Dept. of Education nominee’s attitude about specialized services. Her overall philosophy is toward more privatization (vouchers). The C-M is composed of elements that can be argued for separately if strategically this seems like a good idea. States and localities could possibly implement elements without federal oversight. An overall strategy is to tout C-M’s support of braille to counter the NFB saying that it is anti-braille.

AER should continue vigilantly to join coalitions of blindness and general disability organizations to make it issues know loud and clear.

John Mascia’s lobbyist report – There will be aggressive movement to confirm all cabinet nominees ASAP

ACA will be repealed and not replaced

Sec HHS nominee (Tom Price, a doctor, has expressed some support for durable medical device coverage by Medicaid/Medicare

Tax reform will be passed by end of April

New Supreme Court justice by spring

A debt ceiling fight might happen, placing passage of the budget and federal funding in jeopardy

Advisor Mark indicates that Labor/HHS appropriations bill might be an opportunity to get increases in OIB, APH, etc.

Strategy – What will be our approach if we like some aspects of a bill but not others? Most likely, the best approach will be to voice our opinions on those things that matter and what emerges will most likely not be in our control anyway.

Legislative Committee will attempt to steer AER’s communications to the membership on the issues and action steps members can take. Perhaps when meetings/conferences are held in the D.C. area, members can make trips to the Hill.

Finally, historically, disability has done well under Republicans, so perhaps issues we care about will not be overly damaged and perhaps gain traction. Our strategy to speak our opinion remains paramount.