Minutes: Legislative Committee

Wednesday, June 28, 2017; 6:00 pm Eastern

Call-In numbers

(412) 380-2000.

Guest Code: 6720269#.

In Attendance: Lou (Exec. Director), Tony (co-Chair), Chris (co-Chair), John, Bernadette, Matt, Janie (Pres.-elect), Colette (Board Rep), Sharon (guest). Unable to attend: Anisio, Mark (advisor), Joe (President)

Agenda

-Welcome (including guest) and Roll Call

-Transition announcement of co-Chairs (Matt to Chris)

-Recent activities and some reactions.

Tony reviewed latest member alerts and our strategy of informing/empowering the membership about critical issues. Matt reinforced our stance to do the best we can despite occasional opposition.

The group discussed engaging the Board via motions. This includes requests for the Board to ask membership for information and data on key bills that are in the pipeline. The committee would do well to occasionally encourage membership that their efforts at communicating with their Congressional reps do matter.

Discussion of how Leg. Comm. currently moves certain actions and messages quickly through the pipeline (co-Chairs talk with Lou and Joe who approve actions or if needed, talk to Exec. Committee). The process is working well.

-Partnerships

Current active partnerships include AFB, ACB, NRA, CEC, and COS-B.

Bernadette suggested adding the Vision Serve Alliance and National Association of Private Special Education Centers (http://www.napsec.org/).

Also, monitor our partners’ stances as they may occasionally differ from each other and these differences can be informative to AER.

-Role of the Committee (how much advocacy?)

Lou read the official Charge of the Legislative Committee:

“…to monitor relevant federal legislation for changes that would significantly impact AER members, chapters and divisions and recommend appropriate actions to the AER Board of Directors; assist/advise AER Chapters with legislative issues they initiate.”

As a whole, the meeting reinforced the wisdom of our current approach of informing members of critical issues in a non-partisan manner and highlighted a need for increased attention to legislative advocacy by staying informed, asking members via the Board to help gather information/data, and working with our partners in coalition to promote AER’s legislative agenda.

Additional

WIOA: There are discussions hoping to get rollbacks on ‘workshop’ employment and the removal of the Homemaker goal from VR. Tony expressed desire to monitor VR agency spending on Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS) with an eye toward reducing the annual spending minimum requirement of 15% to a possibly more feasible figure (e.g., 12%).

Medicaid: Health reform legislation currently in debate would significantly reduce Medicaid spending by the States causing much service to be lost by people with disabilities including students.

Cogswell-Macy Act needs more attention. Needed: A Senate champion and more representative signing on board.

RSA Director: AER support Michigan’s Bill Robinson who has done well in the blindness system.

Tony recommended the addition of Sharon Giovinazzo to the Legislative Committee. Sharon “audited” the meeting and both the Committee and Sharon expressed very positive feelings. President Joe Catavero approved Sharon’s nomination. Welcome Sharon!