

The 81st Texas Legislature Weekly Review

First Week

The Texas Senate and House of Representatives gaveled in on Tuesday and the 81st session began! The first week was filled with excitement. A new House Speaker, republican Rep. Joe Straus from San Antonio, was appointed (unanimously) and the Senate started off with a fight. After a more than a day of debate, the Senate majority voted to exclude the voter ID issue when it comes to the long-standing Senate rule requiring two-thirds of Senate (21 members) agreeing to debate/hear a bill before it is allowed to hit the floor. So, the first week was quite interesting all the way around.

The voter ID bill, yet to be filed, may cause additional barriers to voting for minorities—including persons with disabilities. The potential impact of such a measure is yet to be determined, however, since the bill has not been filed.

Meeting with Governor's Office

We were finally able to meet with the Governor's office regarding State Schools and State Centers Centers, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, this week to express our concerns and frustration regarding the current system that provides services to the individuals we serve. This meeting was very promising and his staff revealed that this was a priority issue for Governor Perry and he was open to best practice models and ideas which would bring our system closer to national standards.

It is critical to let Governor Perry, your Senator, and Representative know how important this issue is so please continue to write letters to encourage responsible reform of our current delivery system. Attached, you will find talking points to help formulate your message should you need them.

[Talking Points](#)

To Find out Who Represents (Senator, Representative) you please go to the link below

http://www.house.state.tx.us/resources/faq.htm#who_rep

The Governor's office also reported that they continue to work with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) to address the critical needs and systemic issues outlined in the Department of Justices report to ensure the health and safety of the current residents.

We too will be following up with Commissioner Horn to determine how DADS is addressing the issues outlined in the DOJ report.

Come Make A Difference in 2009: Tuesday's @ The Capitol

Finally, The Arc of Texas will not be hosting an Advocacy Day this year; instead we will be hosting Tuesday's @ The Capitol. Instead of a large one-time rally at the capitol, The Arc of Texas would like to be more strategic in its advocacy efforts.

Tuesday's @ the Capitol will be an opportunity for local Arc chapters and other interested communities to come to Austin and meet with their local legislators about specific issues.

We would like to use this as an opportunity to train advocates on Basic Legislative Advocacy, if needed, in their community first and then have those advocates come to Austin. This is a great way to learn and practice skills in effective advocacy. If you would like to participate in a training and or a Tuesday @ the Capitol, please contact Ginger Mayeaux at gmayeaux@thearcoftexas.org.

We will continue to keep you informed as to what's happening at the capitol with weekly updates. Should you have any questions, concerns, or want to get involved this legislative session please contact Dawn Choate at dchoate@thearcoftexas.org.