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SABE Region 2 Report

First Quarter 2016

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The Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) board meeting was held in Washington DC a week before the Policy Seminar. We had to deal with some fast changing weather one day it was pouring rain, then sunny and 80, and even had a day of light snow. The weather didn't keep us from getting a lot of work done. SABE was very involved in the Policy Seminar, 5 SABE board members spoke at 6 sessions.

We had a special guest speaker that sparked a very good conversation about cultural diversity. Her name is Tawara Goode from The Leadership Institute for cultural Diversity and cultural and linguistic competence. Here are some of my favorite quotes from the conviction.

“Different cultures care about independence or interdependence differently.”

“Only the person can decide what culture they are.”

“We need to identify what words are hurtful to other people.”

“don't let people define you by your culture.”

It was a very good and emotional conversation that I think we as people need to have more often.

There are a few bills that SABE has endorsed and we as the disability community need to get behind

[Bill2427 Disability Integration act](#)

The Disability Integration Act (DIA) is civil rights legislation, introduced by Senator Schumer to address the fundamental issue that people who need Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) are forced into institutions and losing their basic civil rights. The legislation (S.2427) builds on the 25 years of work that ADAPT has done to end the institutional bias and provide seniors and people with disabilities home and community-based services (HCBS) as an alternative to institutionalization. It is the next step in our national advocacy after securing the Community First Choice (CFC) option.

Not too many senators have signed on to this bill yet, but if we educate them on how this affects people with disabilities lives maybe we can get more to sign on.

At the end of 2014 we had a great win with the passing of the [ABLE Act](#), but this is not where the fight stops. On March 17, a bi-partisan group from the members of congress introduced a package of bills that should help enhance the able act. Please talk to your representative from each state and explain why the new bills will help people with disabilities.

The [ABLE to Work Act](#) expands on the goals of the ABLE Act by encouraging work and self-sufficiency. The legislation allows individuals and their families to save more money in an ABLE account if the beneficiary works and earns income. Specifically, in addition to the \$14,000 annual contribution cap, an ABLE beneficiary who earns income from a job could save up to the Federal Poverty Level, which is currently at \$11,770 (potentially increasing allowable annual contributions to \$25,770). The bill will also allow ABLE beneficiaries to qualify for the existing Saver's Credit when they contribute savings.

The [ABLE Financial Planning Act](#) would allow families to rollover savings in a 529 college savings plan into an ABLE account. Many families save for a child's college education by opening a 529 account, sometimes before their child is even born, only to learn later that their child has a severe disability. In such instances, these families have funds trapped in a 529 that they could use to help cover their child's lifelong expenses. But if they withdraw the funds for anything other than college expenses, they face taxes on their withdrawals. The ABLE Financial Planning Act would help these families by allowing them to transfer funds from their 529 account without penalty into an ABLE account for their child with a qualified disability.

The [ABLE Age Adjustment Act](#) would raise the age limit for ABLE accounts to age 46. Currently, individuals with a severe disability that occurred prior to the age of 26 are eligible to open an ABLE account. Many debilitating diseases and conditions can strike later in life, including multiple sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's disease, or paralysis due to an accident. Increasing the age limit for ABLE accounts will allow more individuals to save money to help cover the costs of short, medium and long-term care.

The ABLE National Resource Center (ANRC) applauds the bill sponsors for their continued support of the ABLE Act and for their efforts to improve on the original statute. We will be working in collaboration with other national disability organizations to further analyze the proposed pieces of legislation and to help relevant stakeholders understand potential outcomes of the bill package.

SABE's Voter Project has put together a 67 page report called **Voters with Disabilities Election Report**. It is a very in-depth look at the 2014 elections. It was put together by surveys from people with disabilities from all over the country. If you are interested in this report, I may be able to get you a copy. Send an email to rmducanwood@gmail.com and in the title put the Phrase **Voters with Disabilities Election Report** in the subject.

You should also go check out SABE's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/govoter/featured>

SABE is putting up new videos about advocacy all the time. It's a great way to be inspired by other advocates and meet new people.

If you have any comments or have information that you would like me to share with the SABE Board please email me at rmducanwood@gmail.com. Also if you would like to be added to my list to get this report electronically send your contact information to apmoss240@gmail.com.

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Thank you!

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