

Public Policy Update
February 26, 2010
www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org
From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



➤ *General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)*

On Thursday, February 25th the Minnesota Senate voted to override the Governor's veto of GAMC. The House has tentatively scheduled an override vote on Monday, March 1st. Behind the scenes negotiating is going on between legislators and the Governor's office to resolve the impasse between the two branches of government. It is questionable whether the House has enough votes to override the Governor's veto, so do not be surprised if this vote is delayed until a solution is found between the Legislature and the Governor.

➤ *We Share Our Concerns With the Speaker*

This past week, Executive Director Pat Mellenthin and I were invited to a meeting with Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher, arranged by several centers for independent living. The Speaker spent close to 30 minutes listening about the impact that the Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal would have on persons with disabilities. We also shared information with her about the impact of 2009 budget cuts, particularly PCA cuts. We also shared information about Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS) and other high priorities for The Arc. We asked the Speaker to be a strong spokesperson on behalf of persons with disabilities and their families, and we left her with several CDCS family stories. She thanked us for sharing this information; hopefully this discussion will help preserve our services and supports during this difficult time.

➤ *February Forecast: A Small Ray of Hope*

On Tuesday, March 2nd, the state will release the state's budget forecast. The November forecast identified that the state will have a \$1.2 billion this biennium. The state has since been notified that they are due a payback from the federal government of \$81 million for the state's work on Medicare Part D enrollment activities. It is rumored that revenues to the state will improve slightly, and that the projected deficit should be slightly less than the \$1.2 billion.

Our message to legislators, if this is true, will be that the improved forecast should be used to lessen the cuts to programs for persons with disabilities. Stay tuned as we cross our fingers in hopes that these rumors are true.

➤ *Testimony on the Governor's Budget:*

Individuals with disabilities, family members, and advocates testified in Senate and House Health and Human Services committees this week. Testimony will continue in the House on Tuesday, March 2nd. Thanks to Denise Miller and Steve Hayes for volunteering to share their family stories.

➤ *Tuesdays at the Capitol:*

The Arc of Minnesota, working with the MN Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, is hosting Tuesdays at the Capitol. This is a variation of the vigil we conducted for the last month of the 2009 Legislative Session, when individuals with disabilities and their allies lobbied outside the Senate and House chambers and met with

their legislators. This year, different disability organizations will sponsor each Tuesday. For more on sponsoring a Tuesday at the Capitol, contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or asimons@arcmn.org.

➤ *This Week's Message to Legislators*

Please forward to your legislator the following link to an Op-Ed piece written by our Executive Director, Pat Mellenthin that appeared in the *Pioneer Press* on Wednesday February 24th.

http://www.twincities.com/opinion/ci_14456807?source=rss

The piece is entitled “We Want to Be Part of the Solution, But Some Minnesota Cuts Go Too Far.” Pat talks about the need to spend our tax dollars wisely on disability supports, yet still protecting those supports from the cuts that Gov. Pawlenty proposed on February 15. When you forward this article to your legislators, identify yourself as one of their constituents. Ask them to read the article, and feel free to share your thoughts about some of the important points Pat makes. Urge them to protect from budget cuts those disability supports that maintain independence, and urge them to consider the examples in the article as innovative ideas that can help us create a more sustainable service system. Go to www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/Districtfinder.asp to find your state legislator.

➤ *Creating a 21st Century Plan Follow-Up Summit – March 8, 2010*

The Arc of Minnesota and several other groups representing persons with disabilities are holding a follow-up to the successful summit we held last spring on Creating a 21st Century Plan for Disability and Aging. This year's summit will be in St. Paul on March 8, 2010. The deadline to register is Monday, March 1st. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

➤ *Minnesota Lifespan Respite Summit – March 12, 2010*

Respite care continues to be an unmet need for family caregivers in Minnesota across all age groups. The MN Department of Human Services, MN Board on Aging, National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Minnesota Chapter), and AARP invite you to a working summit on Friday, March 12, 2010 from 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. It will be held at the Wilder Center, 451 Lexington Parkway North, in St. Paul. The summit will: explore possibilities for enhancing respite care services in Minnesota (for all ages and needs); provide information about the Federal Lifespan Respite Care Act, and develop a plan to prepare Minnesota to apply for federal funding. There is no charge for the event; registration deadline is March 5th. [Click here](#) to register.