



## Washington Insider – Monthly Newsletter

*To build a better economic future for people with disabilities and their families*

**National Disability Institute (NDI)** is a not-for-profit research and community development organization dedicated exclusively to promote work, saving, and asset building for persons with disabilities and their families nationwide. As the creator of the Real Economic Impact Tour, in collaboration with the IRS, FDIC, US Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and the Social Security Administration, over 20 national organizations, and support from Bank of America, AT&T, Wal-Mart Foundation, Acorda Therapeutics and Darden Restaurants Foundation, NDI and the Tour volunteers **have assisted over 151,750 taxpayers with disabilities in 60 cities nationwide gain refunds of over 136 million dollars.** With financial education programs, improved access to matched savings accounts and other asset development strategies, NDI is creating a roadmap to financial stability and independence for people with disabilities and their families. From Capitol Hill to state capitols, from urban centers to rural communities across the country, NDI invites you to join with us to promote an economic empowerment agenda, with a focus on policy change and public-private collaboration. Help advance solutions to the challenges of poverty adversely impacting the independence and quality of life for millions of individuals with disabilities regardless of age, gender or

### **Implementation of Historic Economic Stimulus Package Begins -- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)**

The \$789 billion U.S. economic stimulus package, which was signed into law February 17th by President Barack Obama, contains numerous tax provisions including \$282 billion

in tax cuts. Several of the major tax provisions incorporated in the final bill include:

**MAKING WORK PAY TAX CREDIT:** Creates a "Making Work Pay" tax credit of \$400 or 6.2% of earned income (whichever is less) per individual and \$800 for a couple in 2009 and 2010. It is phased out for individuals with adjusted gross incomes over \$75,000 and couples with incomes over \$150,000. This credit is not included in income for purposes of any federal means-tested benefit program, but is included in resources after two months. The credit will apply retroactively to the start of 2009 and extend through 2010. The credit will be received by most people through a small reduction in their withholding, beginning April 1, 2009.

**ONE-TIME PAYMENT FOR SS BENEFICIARIES AND VETERANS:** Provides a one-time payment of \$250 to individuals with disabilities receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients, as well as veterans with disabilities receiving benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Payment will NOT count as income for SSI beneficiaries, thus making all beneficiaries eligible for the one-time payment. However, it will be counted as a resource after nine months. This is in addition to the Making Work Pay Tax Credit, though the economic recovery payment will be a reduction to any Making Work Pay credit for which the recipient qualifies. There is no tax return filing

requirement to access this benefit. Beneficiaries will receive an electronic payment within 120 days of the Secretary of Treasury initiating the benefit.

**STATE GOVERNMENT RETIREES ALSO ELIGIBLE FOR ONE-TIME PAYMENT:** The Stimulus Package includes a comparable \$250 refundable credit for certain government retirees, including state government retirees not eligible for Social Security, or to those federal and state retirees who worked at a time when their wages were not subject to Social Security payroll tax. They will have to file a return and this credit will reduce the amount they may qualify for under the Making Work Pay Credit if the filers are still working. This payment comes in the form of a one-time 2009 refundable tax credit of \$250 for each eligible individual or \$500 for a joint-filing married couple when both spouses are eligible. It will be accomplished by filing a 2009 tax return.

**EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT INCREASE (EITC):** The stimulus package temporarily increases the EITC for working families with three or more children. The bill increases the EITC credit to 45% of the family's first \$12,570 of earned income for families with three or more children and would increase the beginning point of the phase-out range for all married couples filing a joint return (regardless of the number of children) by \$1,880.

**EXPANSION OF CHILD TAX CREDIT:** The bill would increase the eligibility for the refundable child tax credit in 2009 and 2010. For 2008, the child tax credit is refundable to the extent of 15 percent of the taxpayer's earned income in excess of \$8,500. The bill would expand the program in 2009 and 2010 to allow any taxpayer with earned income in excess of \$3,000 to qualify for the credit.

**EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES:** Building off of last year's American Opportunity Credit, the ARRA provides a \$2,500 tax credit for college education expenses. The credit phases out for individuals earning more than \$80,000 and couples with adjusted gross incomes over \$160,000.

**FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS:** The new law raises the current maximum \$7,500 first-time homebuyer tax credit to **\$8,000 OR 10% of the home's value, whichever amount is less**, and extends it at that level through November 30, 2009. It also eliminates any required repayment to the IRS after 36 months in the home. These enhancements apply to purchases of a principal residence by a first-time homebuyer after December 31, 2008. Purchases on or after April 9, 2008 and before January 1, 2009 continue to be governed by the original first-time homebuyer credit enacted last year. The unique aspect of this provision is that the taxpayer can choose to take this new credit on the 2008 1040 tax return if they purchase a home in 2009 prior to the filing of the tax return. Individuals who already filed a 2008 return and would like to take advantage of the tax credit now can file an amended return to claim the credit if they wish to do so. The definition in the bill for a first-time home buyer is anyone that has not owned a home in the last three years. The tax credit phases out for individuals earning more than \$75,000 and couples earning more than \$150,000. However, higher income buyers may receive a *partial credit*.

**ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX:** Provides temporary relief from the alternative minimum tax for millions of middle-class taxpayers.

**Additionally, the stimulus package included several additional forms of assistance beyond tax relief, including the following provisions:**

**AGING SERVICES TECHNOLOGY STUDY & REPORT:** Provides funding to the Secretary

of Health & Human Services to support a study of the use of innovative technologies to assist the elderly, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers throughout the aging process.

**DIGITAL-TO-ANALOG CONVERTER BOX**

**PROGRAM:** Specifies that \$90 million of the \$650 million must be used for education and outreach, including grants to organizations for programs to educate vulnerable populations, including senior citizens, minority communities, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, and people living in rural areas. The funds can also be used to provide one-on-one assistance for installing the digital-to-analog converter boxes for these populations.

**EDUCATION EMERGENCY REPAIR & INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS:**

Criterion includes consideration of whether or not current infrastructure is inaccessible to people with disabilities.

**HEALTH INSURANCE:** For individuals who have lost their jobs from 1 September 2008 thru the end of 2009 and qualify to extend their health insurance benefits under COBRA, the government will cover for the first nine months 65% of the total share of the premium previously incurred by the employer that is shifted to the individual upon termination of employment. Those who didn't elect COBRA coverage at the time of termination of employment will have 60 days to enroll should they choose. However, COBRA is not available for people whose companies go out of business or drop the insurance. The Economic Stimulus Package also includes an additional \$87 billion to support state Medicaid programs.

**HUD PROVISIONS:** Gives the Secretary of Housing & Urban Development broad authority to waive legal requirements in the administration of housing programs under the

Act, but prohibits the Secretary from waiving requirements related to fair housing, non-discrimination, labor standards, and the environment. Ensures that recipients of HUD funding via the economic stimulus package honor Section 8 leases and cannot refuse to rent to Section 8 subpopulations.

**INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

**GRANTS:** All grantees must ensure that all infrastructure building projects are in compliance with Section 504 of Title 4 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

**SMALL BUSINESSES:** Clarifies definition of "individuals with disabilities and business owned by individuals with disabilities" within Small Business Act to confirm the rights of business owners with disabilities to benefit from the tax credits afforded to small businesses.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities nation-wide. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA, Part B (Grants for States). Part B also establishes a state grant program for preschool children (Section 619). Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. All three of these areas will receive funding from the ARRA. The ARRA will provide these programs with an additional \$12.2 billion in supplemental FY 2009 appropriations in the amounts of \$11.3 billion, \$400 million, and \$500 million, respectively.

**UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE:** Under current law, all federal unemployment benefits are subject to taxation. The average unemployment benefit is approximately \$300

per month. The bill temporarily suspends federal income tax on the first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits per recipient. Any unemployment benefits over \$2,400 will be subject to federal income tax. This benefit is in effect for taxable year 2009. Additionally, individuals shall not be disqualified from regular unemployment compensation for separating from employment if that separation is for any compelling family reason, including the illness or disability of a member of the individual's immediate family (as defined by the Secretary of Labor). States will also be receiving significant funding from the ARRA for employment creation initiatives in the energy sector and other high-production industries that may create additional opportunities for job seekers with disabilities.

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION:** \$680 million, including: \$540 million for vocational rehabilitation services; \$18.2 million for state grants; \$87.5 million for independent living centers; and \$34.3 million for services for older blind individuals.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 can be reviewed in its entirety at [www.readthestimulus.org](http://www.readthestimulus.org). Additional details of the various tax initiatives can be ascertained via the IRS Agency Update on Stimulus Tax Provisions at: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=204335,00.html?portlet=6>.

**The Obama Administration is Soliciting Positive Stories Resulting from the Economic Stimulus:** The Obama administration has asked leading organizations representing people with disabilities to help identify persons with a disability that have gone to work or been rehired as a result of the economic recovery plan. For example, a company hiring as a result of money they

receive, or plan to receive. If you or someone you know, fits this description, you are encouraged to email Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy (see Article on Page 5) a brief description at [kareemdale@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kareemdale@sbcglobal.net).

## **U.S. House of Representatives passes FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Bill**

On February 25<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 245-178, the U.S. House of Representatives cleared a massive \$410 billion "omnibus" spending bill covering the rest of the current federal fiscal year 2009, which ends on September 30, 2009. Overall the bill (HR 1105) would increase spending for a broad range of domestic discretionary programs and agencies an average of 8.7%. For nearly 5 months these agencies and programs have been operating under a "continuing resolution" - keeping funding levels at FY 2008 levels since October 1, 2008. The current "continuing resolution" runs through March 6.

The Senate is expected to take up the omnibus spending bill in early March. If 60 votes cannot be achieved to pass the bill before March 6, there is a significant risk that a "continuing resolution" could remain in effect for the rest of the current fiscal year. The Omnibus Appropriations bill includes virtually every federal program impacting the disability community, and provides several funding increases among disability-specific initiatives including but not limited to the following:

- **Community Services Block Grant:** Supports safety net services at the community level for 16 million individuals with \$46 million above 2008 totaling \$700 million.

- **IDEA Part B State Grants:** Increases the share of special education costs met by the federal government to 17.4 percent with \$558 million above 2008 for a total of \$11.5 billion.
- **Housing for Persons with Disabilities:** \$250 million, \$13 million above 2008, to buy, rehabilitate and build housing for people with disabilities.
- **Section 8 Tenant Based Vouchers:** \$16.8 billion, \$341 million above 2008, to continue providing 1.9 million vouchers to assist individuals and families with homes, and also provide 14,000 new targeted vouchers for homeless veterans and those with disabilities during the housing crisis.
- **Section 8 Project Based Vouchers:** \$7.1 billion, \$668 million above 2008 to provide affordable housing to 1.3 million low-income families and individuals, 2/3 who are elderly or have disabilities.
- **Social Services Block Grant:** Helps states assist their most vulnerable with child care, protective services, help for people with disabilities, adoption, counseling, transportation, foster care, substance abuse, and congregate meals with \$1.7 billion.
- **Social Security Administration:** to address the unacceptable backlog of disability claims at the Social Security Administration, improve claims processing times, and support field offices the bill provides an additional \$709 million above 2008 for a total \$10.5 billion.
- **Taxpayer Services for Low Income & Vulnerable Populations:** The bill includes \$2,293,000,000 for Taxpayer Services, an increase of \$143,000,000 above FY 2008 levels. Within the overall amount, \$9.5 million is allocated for low-income taxpayer clinic grants, \$5.1 million is dedicated for the Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program, and \$8 million is reserved for

continuing the Community Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) matching grants program. In administering this program, the IRS is not permitted to treat any in-kind contributions from the IRS as counting toward the \$8,000,000 appropriation, nor shall the IRS reduce any current contributions toward tax return preparation services.

## Obama Administration confirms Senior Disability & HIV/AIDS Policy Advisors

### *Kareem Dale to Serve as Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy*

In an unprecedented move to demonstrate its sound commitment to the disability community, the Obama Administration announced via Vice President Joe Biden that Kareem Dale has been appointed as Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy. The Vice President, who was leading a Presidential Delegation at the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho on February 13<sup>th</sup>, made the announcement during a stop at the Special Olympics' Healthy Athletes Event, a worldwide program in which athletes receive a variety of health screenings and services.

This is the first time that a President has had a Special Assistant focused exclusively on disability policy, a move aimed at demonstrating the President's commitment to ensuring strong advocates for people with disabilities within the Obama Administration. Dale played a critical role on President Obama's transition team before the inauguration, and was considered a likely candidate for this new role within the Obama Administration. Dale, who is partially blind, will have direct access to the President in this role and he will coordinate the Administration's

efforts to see that people with disabilities are on a level playing field with all Americans.

Originally from Chicago, Illinois, Dale previously served as the National Disability Director for the Obama for America campaign. He also served on the Arts Policy Committee and the Disability Policy Committee for then-Senator Obama. Dale graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor's degree in Advertising in May 1995. He received his JD/MBA in May 1999 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, graduating Cum Laude.

***Jeffrey Crowley named Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy***

President Obama also identified his chief leader on AIDS policy in recent weeks. Jeffrey Crowley -- a senior research scholar at Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute and former deputy executive director for programs at the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) -- was recently selected as the director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. As director, Crowley will be responsible for coordinating the federal government's efforts in curbing the spread of HIV through education programs, in addition to coordinating treatment efforts for people living with the virus. He also will serve on the president's Domestic Policy Council and help guide the Obama Administration's disability policies.

During his time at NAPWA, Crowley helped implement major initiatives, including National HIV Testing Day and the Ryan White National Youth Conference. Crowley has expertise in Medicaid policy, including Medicaid prescription drug policies, and Medicare policy. He also has experience in consumer education and training. Crowley has spent the last fourteen years in efforts to improve access to health and social services for people living with

HIV/AIDS, people with physical and mental disabilities, low-income individuals and other groups.

**DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics Initiates Effort to Better Capture Employment Data on People with Disabilities**

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics officially reported for the first time employment data on people with disabilities to be included in the Current Population Survey (CPS). These data have been gathered since June, 2008 when six questions about disability were permanently added to the CPS, a monthly survey the federal government uses to estimate the unemployment level and rate.

The Current Population Survey is a monthly sample survey of approximately 60,000 households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Based on responses to a series of questions on work and job search activities, each person 16 years and over in a sample household is classified as employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. Data on demographic characteristics such as sex, age, and race are also collected. People are classified as unemployed if they had no employment during the reference week; they were available for work at that time; and they made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. Persons laid off from a job and expecting recall need not be looking for work to be counted as unemployed. The unemployment data derived from the household survey in no way depends

upon the eligibility for or receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

The announcement of the data on February 6<sup>th</sup> is the culmination of efforts begun with a 1998 Executive Order signed by then President Bill Clinton on increasing employment of adults with disabilities. The CPS has now incorporated the following six questions to identify persons with disabilities:

- *Is anyone deaf or does anyone have serious difficulty hearing?*
- *Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?*
- *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?*
- *Does anyone have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?*
- *Does anyone have difficulty dressing or bathing?*
- *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?*

A response of "yes" to any one of the questions indicates that the person in question has a disability. The limitation on the number of questions is challenging and the questions are not perfect. However, the same six questions are also used in other large population-based surveys which should help researchers provide more data about the lives of people with disabilities.

Having people with disabilities included in the official count will provide important information about who is currently looking for work, how people with disabilities who are looking for work compare to other populations, and of employment trends over time. The CPS also collects data to measure underemployment. For example, the CPS provides estimates of

the number of persons who are employed part time but would prefer to work full time, as well as the number who are available for work, but have stopped looking for a job because they feel that there is none available for them.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. <http://stats.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm>

STATISTIC	DISABILITY	NON-DISABILITY
<b>Employment Rate</b>	20.0%	65.0%
<b>% Employed by FT/PT Ratio</b>	68.8% FT 31.2% PT	82.4% FT 17.6% PT
<b>% Employed P-T for Economic Reasons</b>	7.3%	4.9%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	13.2%	8.3%
<b>% of Unemployed &gt;27 weeks</b>	30.5%	22.2%

### ***ABLE Act Introduced in both House and Senate***

Congressional champions reintroduced consensus legislation on February 25-26, 2009, to create tax deferred savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2009, (H.R. 1205/S. 493) would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the establishment of tax deferred accounts – much like a “529” college tuition accounts - for the future care of family members with disabilities.

Rep. Ander Crenshaw, the lead sponsor of the legislation in the House of Representatives, stated that the introduction of the ABLE Act of 2009 was the “first step in helping Americans with family members with disabilities to invest in their future and help ensure that resources are available to prepare them to be financially, vocationally and mentally independent in adulthood.”

The ABLE Act of 2009 creates a tax exempt “ABLE Account” that could be used for expenses related to a beneficiary with a

disability including: education, medical and dental care, community based support services, employment training and support, moving, and assistive technology.

“Too often persons with disabilities are caught in between the cracks in our society. The ABLE Act will provide families with a savings tool that is flexible and portable. The accounts are designed to help ease difficult financial situations and provide peace of mind to the families of individuals with disabilities,” said Crenshaw.

Anyone may contribute to an ABLE Account and rollovers from other accounts would be allowed without penalty; however, contributions to these accounts are capped at \$500,000. Under the proposal, the principle in the account would accrue interest tax free during the life of the beneficiary. When distributions are made to the beneficiary for qualified expenses, the distributions are excludable from the gross income of the beneficiary.

Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), and Kendrick Meek (D-FL) joined Crenshaw as original cosponsors of The ABLE Act of 2009. Additionally, Senators Robert Casey (D-PA), Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Orin Hatch (R-UT), introduced a companion bill (S.493) in the U.S. Senate on February 26<sup>th</sup>.

“Parents of children with disabilities face struggles on a daily basis that we can’t even begin to imagine,” said Senator Casey. “This legislation will help make it easier for those families to save for their care and for their future. It will provide families with the financial piece of mind they need.”

## Obama Administration Releases details of FY 2010 Budget Proposal

On February 26th President Obama released his FY2010 budget outline, *A New Era of Responsibility*, to Congress. The 140-page document contains the broad outlines of the President's proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2009. A more detailed version of the budget will be released in April.

In addition to a focus on healthcare reform, continued efforts to strengthen the economy and strategies to decrease the national deficit, the budget also includes some critical asset and economic development provisions that will directly or indirectly impact low-to-moderate income Americans living with disabilities.

### The President's 2010 budget outline identifies the following tax initiatives for implementation in FY2011:

**Extends the Make Work Pay Tax Credit:** The President requests funding to extend this credit beyond 2009 and 2010. The tax credit is also available to self-employed individuals. Current law exempts benefits from the tax credit from public benefit means tests for the month of receipt and the following two months.

**Expands the Saver's Credit:** Provides a fifty percent match on the first \$1,000 of retirement savings for families earning less than \$65,000. The Saver's Credit would be made fully refundable to ensure that savings incentives are universally available. The credit would also apply to college savings accounts.

**Extensions/Elimination of Other Tax Initiatives:** Within the next two years, the budget also proposes to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and make permanent the

American Opportunity Tax Credit for higher education and expanded child tax credit. The budget also eliminates funding for the Advanced Earned Income Tax Credit.

The Administration indicates it would like to work with the Congress to revisit asset limits for Federal means-tested programs in the wake of new and expanded refundable tax credits.

**In addition to key tax initiatives, several programs were highlighted in the initial FY2011 budget document that directly impact many individuals with disabilities:**

#### **Department of Housing and Urban Development**

- Full funding for the Community Development Block Grant program at \$4.5 billion.
- \$1 billion to capitalize and launch an Affordable Housing Trust Fund that will develop, rehabilitate and preserve affordable housing targeted to very-low income households.
- Increased funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program. The Administration also states plans to work with Congress to introduce legislative reforms to improve the program so that more families are assisted. One of the improvements, establishing a transparent and predictable funding system, is critical to the stabilization of the Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS).
- Eliminated funding for the American Dream Down payment Initiative. This program, underfunded in recent years, provided down payment assistance.

#### **Department of Agriculture**

- \$61 million for five Rural Development programs: the rural microentrepreneur assistance program, rural cooperative development grants, value-added producer grants, grants to minority producers and cooperative research agreements.
- \$20 billion in loans and grants to support and expand rural development activities, including employment opportunities for people with disabilities living in rural communities, small businesses, renewable energy and telecommunications.

#### **Department of Education**

- \$7 billion to make Pell Grant funding mandatory and increase and index maximum awards.
- New five-year, \$2.5 billion Access and Completion Incentive Fund to support innovative State efforts to help low-income students succeed and complete their college education.
- There was no mention of initial funding to implement the revisions in the recently passed Higher Education Opportunities Amendments Act with respect to allowing non-degree seeking students with developmental or intellectual disabilities to apply for federal grant or work-study assistance, nor was funding allocated to provide technical assistance to post-secondary institutions committed to targeting this subpopulation of students in further outreach efforts.
- Building on the Economic Recovery Act, the new Administration will help States increase the rigor of their standards so they prepare students for success in college and a career. Resources will also be available

to improve the quality of assessments, including assessments for students with disabilities and English language learners. Such reforms will lay the groundwork for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

### **Department of Health and Human Services**

- \$3.2 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to help low-income families with their home heating and cooling expenses.
- There was no mention of the Assets for Independence program in this preliminary draft. We expect it to be included in the final budget request.
- The budget also requests doubling the funding for the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund.

### **Department of Defense and Department of Veteran Affairs**

- The Budget contains a proposal to expand concurrent receipt of military retired pay and Veterans Disability Compensation (VDC) to retirees who were medically retired from active service. Under current law, military retiree pay is offset by VDC benefits. Thus, military retirees with disabilities would receive significantly greater compensation when the offset is removed.
- DOD and the VA will expand pilot programs to expedite processing of injured troops through the Disability Evaluation System. The expedited system substantially reduces the time required to determine disability rating and, more importantly, alleviates frustration caused by a needlessly complex process.

- The President's Budget increases funding for VA by \$25 billion over the next five years in order to honor our Nation's veterans and expand the services they receive. This funding also enables VA to create Centers of Excellence for hearing and vision impairment and to provide additional veteran oriented specialty care in areas including prosthetics, spinal cord injury, aging, and women's health.

### **Ensuring Wise Expenditures of the Nation's Large Entitlement Programs:**

The Obama Administration proposes a significant increase in program integrity activities at the Social Security Administration (SSA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Labor (DOL), and Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Administration proposes a multi-year strategy, which will permit the agencies to pay closer attention to the risk of improper payments, commensurate with the large and growing costs of the programs administered by these agencies, including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Unemployment Insurance (UI). As an example, the funding provided for SSA will enable the agency to work down a backlog of Continuing Disability reviews, which determine whether individuals continue to qualify for Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income. The number of these reviews has fallen in recent years even as the Disability insurance program has grown.

There is solid and rigorous evidence that these investments can significantly decrease the rate of improper payments and recoup many times their initial investment. For every \$1 spent by SSA on a disability review, \$11 is saved in erroneous payments.

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### **DISCLAIMER**

*This monthly publication is intended primarily for the thousands of volunteers, community organizers, asset building coalition members, business and government leaders and individuals with disabilities and family members who join with the National Disability Institute (NDI) to promote and build a better economic future for youth and working age adults with disabilities nationwide. This publication will provide a general overview of the federal government process and key developments in the federal policy arena. The content is intended to provide factual information, and any interpretative statements are solely those of the editor.*

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!

*NDI welcomes any comments or feedback that you may have on the information provided in this newsletter, as well as how we can improve communication with you and others. Please feel free to email your suggestions to Serena Lowe at [slowe@ndi-inc.org](mailto:slowe@ndi-inc.org).*