

## DC Update

September 12, 2008

### **ADA Amendments Act of 2008**

On Thursday the U.S. Senate passed, by unanimous consent, the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008*. The bill is slightly different than the legislation the House passed in June; however it is expected that House will accept the Senate language and the bill will soon be sent to the President for signature. The disability and business communities participated in continued negotiations to move this bill to the floor. The legislation has strong bi-partisan support and the House may take up the Senate version as early as next week.

Many view that since the passage of the original ADA courts have narrowed the intent of Congress and placed ADA restrictions in the workplace. The business and disability communities have worked with Congress to clarify the legislation's purpose. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Tom Harkin (D-IA) were champions of this effort in the Senate and without their leadership a vote on the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008* was uncertain. The legislation was also a priority for the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP), chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Ranking member Micheal Enzi (R-WY). Both were acknowledged on the Senate floor by their colleagues.

Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) both spoke on the Senate floor in support of the legislation they helped move through. "With today's vote, we have restored the promise of the ADA which was signed into law 18 years ago," said Harkin, the chief author of the original ADA. "The protections afforded under this historic law have been eroded and the result is that people with serious conditions like epilepsy or diabetes could be forced to choose between treating their conditions and forfeiting their protections under the law. That is not what Congress intended when we passed the law, and this bill is the right fix."

"This is a historic day. This bill continues our ongoing effort to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in the American Dream. Passage of the ADA Amendments Act ensures that the Americans with Disabilities Act will continue to help change lives. I'm proud to have worked with my good friend Tom Harkin in crafting this monumental bill that enjoys such strong bipartisan support." Noted Hatch during his remarks.

Look for updates via email alerts and future DC Updates.

### **Budget and Appropriations**

It does not appear that Congress will move forward to enact a final Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill – nor a Department of Justice funding bill. It is likely a continuing resolution (CR) which provides stop-gap funding at FY 2008 levels will be passed; however the expiration of such measure is yet to be determined. This further adds to speculation that Congress will need to return after the November elections for a lame duck session. There continues to be uncertainty surrounding the FY 2009 appropriations process. Look for more information as the process moves forward.

## **Parity**

Wednesday, September 10, 2008 was Parity Call -In Day. Grassroots were encouraged to call their members of Congress and urge them to pass parity before the end of September. We encourage you to continue to talk to your Representative and Senators and ask them to complete parity legislation. In another effort to show support for the measure, Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN) will hold a parity rally on Capitol Hill next Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. While a lame duck session remains unclear, advocates are asking that the parity bill be passed before the tentative adjournment date, September 26, 2008. NACBHDD will keep you updated of new developments.

If you have any questions about legislation or public policy, please contact me directly via email, [mgilmore@nacbhd.org](mailto:mgilmore@nacbhd.org) or by phone 202-661-8816.

Thank you.