

Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities



2011 Annual Report



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Executive Summary

January 16, 2012

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
Texas State Capitol
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Perry,

On behalf of the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities, it is our privilege to submit our annual report on the work of the Committee and staff from January to December, 2011.

The report represents accomplishments and activity highlights for the 2011 calendar year; it is not intended to be a cumulative history. Report components include quarterly staff activity, an analysis of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Roundtable events, presentations made by our Committee members, detailed outreach in the communities, statistics on the number of constituents assisted, and summaries of efforts and events in partnership with our Local Committees. Also included is the *Annual Disability History Perspective* for 2011 which includes significant historical events related to people with disabilities that have occurred in Texas, the U.S and internationally. We are extremely proud of the accomplishments made by staff and Committee members during 2011.

Outreach and Programs

Over the past year the Committee's community outreach coordinator has started two new local Mayor's Committees on People with Disabilities in Laredo and Denton and worked on the revitalization of committees in Lubbock, Amarillo, Dallas, Garland, Odessa, San Angelo, and Lufkin. Local Committees function in a similar fashion as the Governor's Committee, except at the local level. And, when important information needs to be disseminated to Texans with disabilities across the state, as in a natural disaster, messaging through our Local Committees has been extremely successful. Local Committees have their own community projects and awards programs and the Governor's Committee supports Local Committees by providing timely information via its messaging outreach through GovDelivery on a variety of disability related topics and by helping to highlight their local programs and awards.

Three successful awards programs were completed during 2011: the Barbara Jordan Media Awards held in partnership with the [UT Division of Diversity and Community Engagement](#) on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin; the annual Lex Frieden Employment Awards held in Austin in partnership with the [Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities](#); and the first presentation of the [Accessibility Awards](#) held in Austin, in partnership with the Texas Registered Accessibility Specialists Association (TRASA), now known as the Accessibility Specialists Association (APA). In conjunction with the Lex Frieden Employment Awards in October, a Texas version of the [National Disability Employment Awareness Month poster](#) was created in partnership with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services Media Services Department and sent to over **2,500** public and private businesses in Texas, highlighting the benefits of employing Texans with disabilities. This year's theme, "Profit by Investing in Employees with Disabilities," was well received and requests for the Texas poster were received from many other states.



The Committee continues its targeted efforts to help educate and inform Texans on the variety of issues important to Texans with disabilities in each of its [ten issue areas](#) of access, communications, education, emergency management, health, housing, recreation, transportation, veterans and workforce.

In July of 2011, the staff implemented [GovDelivery](#). GovDelivery has greatly increased the number of people we reach directly and has streamlined communications, directing users to information that creates high value to citizens, local communities and advocates across Texas, the U.S. and to our Committee. We originally structured our outreach and technical assistance efforts into four topic areas: Accessible Technology; ADA and Accessibility/Disability Rights; Emergency Management; and Local Disabilities Committees & Awards Programs. On December 6, 2011, we created two new topic areas, Employment of People with Disabilities and Veterans with Disabilities. Prior to using GovDelivery, the staff used a Google listserv and a listserv managed by Texas A & M University.

Outreach efforts increased from **260** recipients on both listservs to **6,059** recipients at year end.

Gov Delivery Bulletin Topics (as of 12-31-11)	Recipients
Accessible Technology <i>(since 7-7-11)</i>	1,019
ADA and Accessibility/ Disability Rights <i>(since 7-7-11)</i>	1,187
Emergency Management <i>(since 7-7-11)</i>	1,010
Employment of People with Disabilities <i>(since 12-6-11)</i>	868
Local Disabilities Committees & Awards Programs <i>(since 7-7-11)</i>	1,130
Veterans with Disabilities <i>(since 12-6-11)</i>	845
Total	6,059

The staff of the Committee continued in 2011 to utilize a Microsoft Access database to accurately track communication with constituents and provide educational and informational technical assistance, previously recorded manually. The database allows us to do [quality management](#) analysis regarding calls and emails so we can direct our technical assistance into subjects and issues where and when it is needed most.

For the calendar year, staff responded to **2,570** calls and emails from citizens, provided **381,055** instances of technical assistance, education and outreach. [Appointed Committee members](#) participated throughout the year in their local communities by providing 31 instances of outreach activities.

This year our Accessibility Coordinator hosted accessible virtual Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Roundtable presentations in partnership with the [Southwest Disability Technical Assistance Center \(DBTAC\)](#) at Independent Living Research Utilization Program through a fully accessible [Talking Communities platform](#). Developed by a computer user who is blind, the formation of Talking Communities opened a new world for online collaboration through the use of accessible voice-conferencing and interactive tools. The platform allows moderators and presenters to be in various parts of the country, saving money on travel and presenter expenses



and making global collaboration a reality. The ADA virtual roundtables help educate [ADA Coordinators](#) of state agencies, universities, colleges and public entities on a variety of issues and benefit our Local Committees by providing information to them, saving them the costs of time and travel.

This past year, the executive director continued her work on the [FEMA Local, State, Tribal and Federal Task Force](#) which began on April 7, 2010, related to making recommendations toward national preparedness of the whole community and people with disabilities. After the initial report was finalized, the Task Force continued advising on the [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#), the National Disaster Response Framework and the [Presidential Policy Directive 8 \(PPD-8\)](#).

There are continuing efforts to assist the [Texas Division of Emergency Management \(TDEM\)](#) and FEMA on the unique and challenging issues related to Texans with disabilities and the emergency management life cycle. Over the last 18 months, staff worked with the [Functional and Access Needs Services and Supports \(FNSS\) Committee](#), facilitated by TDEM and made up of state agency representatives, Red Cross, local emergency managers and citizens with disabilities to create a [FNSS Toolkit](#). In October 2011, the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities and TDEM joined once again to create a Disability Stakeholder Advisory Committee, made up of people with disabilities and agencies that support people with disabilities across Texas. Representatives from 15 groups now advise emergency management leadership on unique issues related to people with disabilities who have access and functional needs. In September 2011, staff consulted with the Texas Department of Public Safety on the new AMBER alert criteria for citizens with intellectual disabilities.

In January 2011, the Governor's Committee continued its alliance with the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) and the National Association of Governor's Committees on People with Disabilities (NAGC). The Alliance has the following mutual goals:

Outreach and Communication Goals

- Disseminate information through ODEPs and NAGCs websites and Facebook pages.
- Disseminate training and education materials to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities at conferences and events.
- Disseminate information on conferences and events that advance employment for people with disabilities.

Training and Education Goals

- Disseminate training and education materials to NAGC members, local governments, employers and community-based organizations that address disability employment issues and advance recruitment and employment of job candidates with disabilities.
- Disseminate and share with NAGC members and local partners effective disability employment practices.

Technical Assistance Goals

- Conduct activities to identify, document and disseminate effective, emerging or model disability employment strategies, policies, and practices.
- Collaborate to identify employment issues of concern to state and local partners, employers, and people with disabilities to whom the Alliance should direct particular attention and resources.



National Dialogue Goals

- Raise awareness of the importance of the employment of people with disabilities.
- As appropriate, convene or participate in forums, information sharing discussions, focus groups, or stakeholder meetings on innovative employment solutions or on issues critical to state or local implementation of disability employment policies and practices.

For the past two years, staff have partnered with the [New Mexico Governor's Disability Commission](#) and the [New University of New Mexico Center on Development and Disability](#) on the [Southwest Conference on Disability](#). Over *1,000* individuals participated in the conference from all over the U.S. The Texas contributions to the conference included collaboration with Knowbility and VSA Texas to bring Henry Butler, an internationally renowned jazz musician, to the conference, and [John Bramblitt, a Texas painter who is blind](#) and was designated as the Texas Artist in Residence at the conference. We facilitated [Sight, Sound, Soul](#) with Henry Butler singing and playing and John Bramblitt painting the experience in real time. All the while, a performance interpreter, also from Texas, provided [musical sign language](#). [VSA Texas](#) provided the audio description for the event. The Sight, Sound Soul event also had Communication Access Real-time Translation or [CART](#) interpretation for people with visual impairments.

Over the summer of 2011, the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities collaborated with [Professor Lex Frieden, the University of Texas Chancellors Health Fellow](#) on Disability and a Professor at UT Houston on a survey of Texans related to accessible technology. As the Chancellors Health Fellow on Disability, Professor Frieden's goals included exploring the use of technology to facilitate independent living among people with disabilities and expanding employment opportunities. The results of that survey were analyzed by [Dr. Edward Elms](#) to be used in future endeavors.

Also in regards to accessible technology, the staff of the Governor's Committee host TechLunch, which is an informal gathering of public and private entities interested in accessible technology and products. TechLunch has been meeting the first Wednesday of every month for the past 18 years. Discussion and actions from this group has led to a better understanding of the benefits of accessible technology to Texans with disabilities and has become a model for other states.



82nd Legislative Session Policy Recommendations

Finally, the Committee developed its [2011-2013 biennium policy recommendations](#) for the 82nd Legislative Session, a 94-page report that included 115 recommendations related to Texans with disabilities' full inclusion and access to community and work life in Texas. Eleven of the 115 recommendations were enacted into law, which included bills related to disability history, people first language and anti-bullying of students with disabilities.

In an effort to be fiscally responsible and good stewards of tax dollars, the Committee has met in Austin for the last year, saving the cost of travel for staff and our seven ex-officio members from other health and human services agencies. We research flights and destinations so that Committee members can arrive at the same time to share rental cars and customize each members travel so that we recommend the least expensive travel scenario. Additionally, when asked to speak at conferences out of Austin, staff ask the requesting party to cover travel related expenses and conference registration fees.

Leaning Forward into 2012

The staff and members of the Committee will continue to seek out new partnerships and collaborations in order to meet our mission. Additionally, we will explore ways to utilize social media and technology solutions to reach out to a wider audience. The Committee will be thoughtful and forward-thinking as it looks at research and data to develop its policy recommendations for the 83rd Legislative Session in January of 2013. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges of 2012.

Governor, we appreciate the support you give the Committee and staff in our work with and for Texans with disabilities and respectfully submit our annual report. We look forward to 2012 and continuing our work with you, the legislature and citizens toward a fully inclusive Texas.

Sincerely,

Angela English, LPC, LMFT
Executive Director

Joe Bontke
Chairperson



History

The Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities has a long and rich history. Shortly after Franklin Delano Roosevelt in August of 1943 declared October 24-30 as National Hearing Week, Texas Governor Coke Stevenson released a Proclamation for National Hearing Week in Texas. In 1950, Governor Allan Shivers appointed the first "Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped" and in 1978 Governor Dolph Briscoe officially created the Committee through [Executive Order DB-40](#). Executive orders by governors William P. Clements in 1981 ([WPC-14A](#)) and 1987 ([WPC 87-16](#)) and Mark White in 1983 ([MW-10](#)) continued the committee, with Executive Order MW-10 changing the name to the "Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons." In 1991, the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities was created statutorily by [Senate Bill 381](#) in order to continue the functions of the Council on Disabilities, a separate entity, which was abolished on the recommendation of the Sunset Commission.

Mission

The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities' mission is to provide leadership and support so that its citizens with disabilities can live and work in a state where people with disabilities have the opportunity to enjoy full inclusion and equal access to lives of independence, productivity, and self-determination.



Committee Functions

The Committee's eleven core functions are outlined in the [Human Resources Code, Title 7, Chapter 115, Section 115.009](#)

The Committee shall:

1. Serve as a central source of information and education on the abilities, rights, problems, and needs of persons with disabilities, and as necessary, issue reports;
2. Provide information to and advise the Governor and the Governor's staff on matters relating to the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life;
3. Before the end of each even-numbered year, submit to the Governor and to the Legislature a report that includes:
 - A. the status of the States compliance with federal and state laws pertaining to rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities and recommendations to achieve further compliance, if necessary;
 - B. a long-range state plan for persons with disabilities and recommendations to implement that plan; and
 - C. any [recommended changes in state laws](#) relating to persons with disabilities;
4. Serve as the states liaison agency in working with the [President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities](#) (now [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)) and other entities involved in activities or concerns affecting persons with disabilities;
5. Develop and work with a statewide network of volunteer community-level committees to promote dissemination of information about and implementation of federal and state laws addressing rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities;
6. Evaluate the States compliance with the federal [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 \(Pub. L. No. 101-336\)](#) and other federal and state statutes relating to rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities;
7. Provide information and technical assistance to public and private agencies and businesses to promote and facilitate implementation of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Pub. L. No. 101-336) and other federal and state statutes relating to rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities;
8. Collect and evaluate data on employment of persons with disabilities by state agencies;
9. Work with legislative committees and with state agencies on the development of laws and policies that affect persons with disabilities;
10. Promote [compilation and publication of state laws relating to persons with disabilities](#); and
11. [Issue awards](#) and other forms of recognition to persons and organizations making outstanding contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities and to public awareness of issues impacting persons with disabilities.



The Committee's Ten Issue Areas

The Committee structures its work into ten broad issue areas, they are:

Access

State and federal laws strive to guarantee that people with disabilities can access the same places and services as the rest of the population. The Committee examines the physical accessibility of places and programmatic access to services. The scope of this examination includes any services that fall under [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA), which covers state and local governments, and [Title III of the ADA](#), which covers most business enterprises, known as public accommodations. The Committee looks at other important sub-issues in this area, such as [accessible voting](#) and the use of [service animals](#). Key state and federal agencies that the Committee partners with are the [Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation](#) (TDLR) and the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ).

Communications

People with disabilities deserve effective communication, whether they are applying for jobs, speaking to their doctors, or receiving emergency alerts. For this reason, accessible communication and the assistive technologies that make this communication possible are of vital importance in all of the Committee's issue areas. The Committee examines the accessibility of websites, e-learning tools, and emergency notifications, to name just a few, and monitors new and emerging assistive technology devices. The Committee is also dedicated to promoting "[people first language](#)," which emphasizes the dignity of each person by putting the person before the disability in descriptive language. Key state and federal agencies that the Committee partners with are the [Texas Department of Information Resources](#) (DIR), the [Texas Public Utilities Commission](#) (PUC), the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC), and the [U.S. Access Board](#).

Education

Students with disabilities can face educational challenges from the moment they begin pre-school through the day they sit for a professional licensing examination. The Committee supports inclusion and accommodation of people with disabilities at all ages and levels of the educational process. The Committee's work in this area covers services provided under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), the special education process as administered by the Texas Education Agency, anti-discrimination under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), and accessible educational technologies. The key state and federal agencies the Committee partners with are the [Texas Education Agency](#) (TEA) and the [U.S. Department of Education](#).



Emergency Management

Texas faces a wide range of potential hazards; since [1953, it has experienced more Presidentially-declared disasters than any other state](#). The Committee covers all aspects of emergency management for Texans with disabilities including planning for natural, man-made, and disease-related disasters. The Committee plays an instrumental role in the Functional Needs and Support Services committee at the [Texas Division of Emergency Management](#) (TDEM). This interdisciplinary committee of experts continually updates comprehensive guidance on meeting the needs of the whole community, including citizens with functional and access needs, during an emergency. The key state and federal agencies that the Committee partners with are TDEM, the [Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#) (HHSC), the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) (DSHS), the [Texas Public Utility Commission](#) (PUC), the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA) and the [U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS).

Health

The Committee is dedicated to promoting health and wellness among Texans with disabilities, including those who face financial, attitudinal, or physical barriers to quality healthcare. The Committee provides analysis and guidance in the areas of health insurance, public benefits programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, and physical accessibility of medical facilities and equipment. The Committee is also dedicated to promoting mental health and addressing the particular needs of those experiencing mental illness. Further, as the population of Texas ages, more Texans have increased and varied health care needs. The Committee supports solutions that allow Texans to “age in place,” supported by their family and community. The key state and federal agencies that the Committee partners with are the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) (DSHS), the [Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services](#) (DARS), the [Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services](#) (DADS), and the [Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services](#) (CMS).

Housing

A stable, accessible home can allow a Texan with a disability to live a productive life of independence within the community. The Committee supports affordable, accessible housing options and compliance with the [Fair Housing Act](#) and local visitability ordinances. The Committee also provides information on home modifications, financial assistance for housing, and tax credits and exemptions. The key state and federal agencies that the Committee partners with are the [Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs](#) (TDHCA) and the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD).

Recreation

Recreation promotes physical and mental wellness for all Texans. The Committee supports accessible recreational opportunities for Texans with disabilities and provides information on physical access to recreational facilities, including parks, sports arenas, and arts organizations. The Committee also applauds the involvement of people with disabilities on sports teams and as artists, actors, and musicians. The key state and federal agencies the Committee partners with are the [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) (TPWD) and the [U.S. Access Board](#). There are also independent organizations contracted by the [U.S. Department of the Interior](#), such as the [National Park Service](#) and the [National Center on Accessibility](#) that provide consultation on accessible recreational opportunities.



Transportation

Because people with disabilities are more active in their communities than ever before, they deserve reliable and accessible transportation to allow for their full participation in a wide range of activities. The Committee examines all forms of transportation from the everyday issues of accessible parking and para-transit services, to planning for business and recreational travel by airplane and ship. Key state and federal agency partners are the [Texas Department of Transportation](#) (TxDOT), the [Texas Department of Motor Vehicles](#) (DMV), the [Texas Department of Public Safety](#) (DPS), the [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA), the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) (DOT), the [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA), the [Aviation Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation](#), and the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ).

Veterans

Texas is currently home to around 1.7 million veterans, many with disabilities. The Committee looks at all aspects of veterans services, including housing, medical care, benefits determination, employment, and health. The 82nd Legislature created the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services to improve the coordination of services for Texas veterans, service members, and their families. The key state and federal agencies that partner with the Committee are [Texas Workforce Commissions Veterans Services](#), the [Texas Veterans Commission](#) (TVC), and the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA).

Workforce

Texans with disabilities represent a valuable and skilled labor market that is sometimes overlooked by employers. The Committee supports compliance with [Title I of the ADA](#), which prohibits discrimination against applicants or employees with disabilities by covered entities. The Committee also supports innovative approaches to integrating people with disabilities into the workforce, including the use of new reasonable accommodations, assistive technologies, and trainings in best practices for both employers and employees. The key state and federal agencies that partner with the Committee are the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) (TWC), the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC), and the Department of Labor, particularly the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP).



Committee Membership and Staff

Introduction:

Based on the Committees enabling statute, the Governor appoints 12 citizen members to the Committee every two years. Seven of the Committee Members must be people with disabilities.

Committee Members

Joe Bontke of Houston is the current Chair of the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. He is the [Outreach Manager and Ombudsman for the Houston District Office](#) of U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Joe has been in the field of Human Resources and Civil Rights for the past 24 years and has experience in employment law and adult education. With a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and a Master's degree in Education, he has been a Human Resources Director, a Training Coordinator for the American Disabilities Act (ADA) Technical Assistance Center for Federal Region VI, was appointed as Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine and served as Vice Chair of the Committee before his appointment to Chair. Using his entertaining style, Joe has educated groups throughout the country. Recently, his work at the EEOC has enabled him to empower employers and employees with the understanding they need to work effectively at their jobs. Joe believes that 90% of education is knowing where to find the information when you need it.

Aaron W. Bangor, Ph.D., of Austin is the current Vice-Chair of the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. He is a Principal Member of Technical Staff at AT&T Labs. He is a member of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society and serves on national and international committees regarding the usability and accessibility of technology. He holds seven patents and is board certified in professional ergonomics as a Certified Human Factors Professional. Dr. Bangor received Bachelors' degrees, a Master's degree, and a Doctoral Degree in Human Factors Engineering from Virginia Tech.

Rodolfo "Rudy" Becerra, Jr. of Nacogdoches recently graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University with a Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation. While at the university, he worked as a Disability Consultant for the Office of Students with Disabilities and a Library Assistant managing the adaptive technology in the computer lab. He is a former member of the Nacogdoches Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities. Currently, Mr. Becerra is preparing to enter graduate school in the near future.

Daphne Brookins of Forest Hill is a Human Services Specialist for the City of Fort Worth (CAP). She is an Alumni board member of Texas Wesleyan University, and serves on the board of directors for Expand Your Horizons, introducing young girls to careers in fields of Math and Science, and Amon Carter Jr. Downtown YMCA, Girls, Inc., New Directions Initiative, Tarrant County Challenge, and Southeast Fort Worth Dropout Coalition. She is a former forum leader and past spokesperson for the American Cancer Society, former Mayor Pro Tem and Councilman for the City of Forest Hill, a past member of the Tarrant County CHIP Coalition and a former member of Fort Worth Sister Cities Young Professional Advisory Council. Ms. Brookins was awarded "Greatest Woman in Texas" in 2009 and "40 Under 40" in 2008 by the Fort Worth Business Press. She received a Bachelor's degree from Texas Wesleyan University.



David A. Fowler of Katy is a retired U.S. Army Veteran. He serves as a Vice President for the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the President of the Texas Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He has served as the Vice President and Advocacy Director of the Texas Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and as a Commissioner on the Houston Commission on Disabilities. He is a member of the Houston Veterans Association, the Disabled American Veterans, and the 82nd Airborne Association. Mr. Fowler attended Houston Community College.

Connie Sue Kelley of Humble was a caregiver for many years for her husband, who had serious health problems until he passed away in 2009, and for her daughter, who has had health issues since she was nine years old. Ms. Kelley is a native Texan, born in Houston and raised in the oil fields of West Texas and East Texas, living in oil field camps that provided the sense of community that helped form who she is. Ms. Kelley attended Kilgore Jr. College, where she was nominated to Who's Who in Education, and later attended Stephen F. Austin University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Elementary Supervision with a Minor in Reading. After graduation, she taught for fifteen years, married her husband, who was a Methodist minister, and eventually moved to Humble, which she still calls home.

Margaret Larsen of Austin is the President and CEO of Special Olympics Texas, a position in which she has served for 16 years. She sits on Special Olympics, Inc.'s United States Leadership Council and serves as the Chair of the Government Relations Committee. Representing Special Olympics Texas, she has led national legislative efforts for Special Olympics Hill Day in Washington, D.C.. Ms. Larsen formed a special committee to focus on proper terminology and respectful language, subsequently launching a public awareness campaign about the "R-word" that garnered national attention and recognition. With Ms. Larsen's foresight and drive, today Special Olympics Texas is one of the largest and most respected programs in the world with the participation of more than 44,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Ms. Larsen holds a degree from John Hopkins University, and was a Post Graduate Reader at Exeter College in the Oxford University system.

Maureen F. M^cClain of Mercedes is a former Associate Director of Disability Services at the University of Texas-Pan American. She is a member of the Association of Higher Education and Disabilities, and was appointed to the Academic Advisement Council. She is a past member of the Rio Grande Valley Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors. Ms. M^cClain received a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Rehabilitative Counseling from The University of Texas Pan American.

David Ondich of Burleson is the Human Resources and Disability Specialist within the Human Resources Department at the City of Fort Worth. He works on several key city initiatives related to the recruitment, training and retention of a diverse workforce to include individuals with disabilities. Mr. Ondich has completed coursework for his Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counseling from The University of Texas at Austin. Prior to attending UT Austin, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Sciences and a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling Psychology from UT Southwestern Medical School of Allied Health in Dallas. He provides consultation to the Diversity Advisory Committee to the City Manager, serves as Chair of the Fort Worth Return to Work Committee, and as Staff Liaison to the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities. In 2008, he received The Governor's Trophy for his innovative efforts to employ Texans with disabilities in Fort Worth. In 2009, he received a Barbara Jordan Media Award for a television documentary titled "Reaching Higher: Versie Returns to Work."



Shawn P. Saladin, Ph.D., CRC, CPM of Edinburg is the Interim Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Texas-Pan American. He is an Associate Professor and Coordinator of Deaf Rehabilitation for the Department of Rehabilitation and the current Chair of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification and past president of the Texas Rehabilitation Association. He has previous work experience with the state of Texas State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. He served on the Rehabilitation Council of Texas for six years prior to his appointment to the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities.

Kathy S. Strong of Garrison is Executive Director of the Nacogdoches Treatment Center. She is an ex-officio member of the Nacogdoches Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities. She is a member of the Leadership Nacogdoches Steering Committee and serves on the Texas State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease - Emphasis on Caregivers. She served as director of an accessible housing project in Nacogdoches and taught special education classes. Ms. Strong received a Bachelor's Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University.

Patty Watson of Flower Mound is a Technology Executive for Bank of America. She is executive sponsor of Bank of America's North Texas Disability Affinity Group and a member of the Lime Connect Board of Directors, a company that places people with disabilities in quality jobs throughout the country. She is also a volunteer coach for the Greater Lewisville Area Soccer Association. Ms. Watson served in the U.S. Air Force. She received a Bachelor's Degree from Saint Mary's College at Notre Dame and a Master's of Business Administration from the University of Dayton in Ohio.

Staff Members

Angela English, LPC, LMFT, Executive Director

Ms. English has served as the Executive Director of the Committee since August of 2008. Ms. English's previous experience includes serving for six years as the Accessibility and Disability Rights Coordinator for the Committee by providing technical assistance regarding accessibility and disability rights laws. She has 13 years previous service with the legacy agency Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in Mental Health Quality Management. She has a Master's degree from Baylor University in Educational Psychology and a Bachelor's Degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Ms. English is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She has teaching degrees in Special Education and Art Education K-12 grades. She has additional training in investigative and forensic hypnosis, behavioral analysis and interviewing techniques from the University of Houston, and certification in Human Resources Management from the University of Texas. In 2010, she was appointed by Janet Napolitano to serve on the FEMA Task Force on Local, State, Tribal and Federal Preparedness which was charged with assessing the state of the nation's disaster preparedness and making recommendations. In 2011, Ms. English continued to work under the Task Force on the Presidential Policy Directive 8 and the National Disaster Frameworks on the inclusion of the whole community principles related to disaster preparedness and homeland security. She's been selected for the Who's Who in Medicine and Healthcare (2005), Who's Who Among Human Service Professionals (1999), Notable Women in Texas (1984), Outstanding Young Women in America (1979), and was the Outstanding Graduate in Art from Carson Newman College in 1979.



Erin Lawler, JD, MS, Accessibility and Disability Rights Coordinator

Ms. Lawler has served as the Accessibility and Disability Rights Coordinator for the Committee since June of 2011. She is a licensed Texas attorney and an experienced mediator. She earned a *Juris Doctor* degree with honors from Notre Dame Law School, a Master of Science with honors from the London School of Economics, and a Bachelor of Arts from American University, where she graduated *phi beta kappa*. In September 2011, Ms. Lawler was appointed to the Disability Issues Committee of the State Bar of Texas. She is a Credentialed Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association and an attorney-mediator with the Austin Dispute Resolution Center. Ms. Lawler won the Dean's Award from Notre Dame Law School for outstanding work in Non-profit Organizations.

Jo Virgil, MS, Community Outreach and Information Coordinator

Ms. Virgil has served as Community Outreach and Information Coordinator for the Committee since January 2009. Ms. Virgil holds a Master of Journalism degree from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Texas Tech University, as well as teacher certification in English and Journalism. Her background includes a position as Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble and, before that, as a reporter and columnist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Her work with Barnes & Noble included planning and implementing events (such as author signings, writing workshops, performances, and other community-related events) and working with local schools, libraries, literacy and arts organizations, and other non-profit organizations to promote literacy as well as to build a sense of community. Ms. Virgil currently serves on the Board of the Central Texas Storytelling Guild. She is active in Story Circle Network, an organization that encourages women to write their life stories, and the Writers League of Texas.

Nancy Van Loan, Executive Assistant

Ms. Van Loan is the Executive Assistant for the Committee. Ms. Van Loan has sixteen years experience with the Office of the Governor providing technical support for the Executive Director, Committee members, and staff. She has twenty years of service with the State including four years with the Texas Department of Insurance Workers Compensation Division. She has taken undergraduate courses from Mohave and Pima Community Colleges in Arizona, and the University of Central Texas. Ms. Van Loan served four years in the United States Army Signal Corps and has six years managerial experience in the grocery stores industry.

Dawn Woodall, Administrative Assistant

Ms. Woodall is the Administrative Assistant for the Committee. Ms. Woodall has eleven years experience working for the Texas Legislative Council and other state agencies providing technical support to Executive Directors and staff. Before accepting the position with the Governor's Office, Ms. Woodall worked as a Caseworker Assistant and Executive Assistant for the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. Ms. Woodall has undergraduate studies in the field of psychology.



Ex Officio Members, Representatives and Advisors

Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)

Chris Traylor, Commissioner

Marc Gold, Texas Promoting Independence Initiative

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)

Debra Wanser, Commissioner

Karissa Garcia, Stakeholder Relations

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Howard G. Baldwin, Jr. Commissioner

Christy Dees, Director, Center on Policy and Innovation

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

Thomas Suehs, Executive Commissioner

Frank Genco, Senior Policy Advisor for Long Term Care

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

David L. Lakey, MD, Commissioner

Robyn Strickland, Program Coordination and Implementation Unit

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)

William H. Kuntz, Jr. Executive Director

Robert Posey, Manager Architectural Barriers Program

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

Tom Pauken, Chairman

George McEntyre, WIA Policy/Program Assistance Supervisor and TWD Veterans Contact



Committee Awards Programs

The Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities has a long history of honoring the achievements of Texans with disabilities by presenting awards for best practices and exemplary endeavors of employers and media professionals. As part of our mission to further opportunities for Texans with disabilities to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity, and self-determination, we proudly sponsor three annual awards programs.

About the Barbara Jordan Media Awards

In 1982, the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities created the media relations program which includes a series of prestigious annual awards recognizing outstanding contributions by individuals and organizations of the communications media. In 1998, the Committee added a high school student subcategory to the Barbara Jordan Awards competition in an effort to encourage and educate a new generation of journalists. Contributions are recognized for eliminating attitudinal, social, and physical barriers and encouraging accurate and progressive portrayals of people with disabilities in the media.

[The Barbara Jordan Media Awards](#) recognize representatives of the communications media in the fields of print, radio, television, Internet, advertising, photojournalism, public relations, books, and special contributions for increasing public understanding of the abilities and potential of people with disabilities.

2011 Barbara Jordan Media Award Winners (for 2010 submissions)

The 2011 Barbara Jordan Media Awards were hosted by the University of Texas Division of Diversity and Community Engagement in partnership with Bank of America, the University of Texas College of Communications, and the University of Texas Student Government Students with Disabilities Agency in Austin.

Book Category

[Challenged to Win](#)

Nancy Shugart, author

Print Commentary

[Daughter Was Mostly Invisible](#)

Sarah Barnes, Austin American-Statesman

Print Feature

[About a Boy](#)

Michael Hall, Texas Monthly Magazine

Print News

[UT Arlington Hosts 27 Injured Soldiers](#)

Patrick Walker, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Student

Poster Series: *The Deaf Are Just Like Everyone Else*

Gabriela Hanrahan, Barbara Jordan High School for Careers, Houston



Entertainment

[Temple Grandin: HBO Special](#)

Mike Jackson, Director

Internet

[Defined by His Successes](#)

Melissa Mixon, UT Austin Cockrell School of Engineering

Photojournalism

[Journey into the World of Autism](#)

Eli Meir Kaplan, Time.com

Special Contribution/Organization

[Coalition of Texans with Disabilities \(CTD\)](#)

CTD Film Festival; Haitian Amputee Soccer Team
Dennis Borel, Executive Director

TV Documentary (TIE)

[The Eyes of Me](#)

Keith Maitland, Illegal Films

[For Once in My Life](#)

Goodwill Industries of South Florida

TV Feature

[Actors with Disabilities Find Open Arms](#)

Jim Swift, KXAN-TV, Austin

TV Feature, Extended

Sideline Signer

Bob Phillips, Texas Country Reporter, Dallas



About the [Lex Frieden Employment Awards](#)

Since 1979, the Governor's Committee has highlighted the efforts of employers to hire and retain employees with disabilities, and to recognize best practices affecting employees with disabilities within the workplace. This year, the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities announced that the annual employment awards were renamed after disability rights champion and independent living movement leader Lex Frieden, one of the architects of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Frieden is the UT Chancellors Health Fellow on Disability, a professor of biomedical informatics and rehabilitation at UT Health and director of the Independent Living Research Utilization Program (ILRU) at TIRR Memorial Hermann Rehabilitation Hospital. He was appointed by President George W. Bush as chair of the National Council on Disability in 2002. He served an eight-year term on the United Nations Panel of Experts on the Standard Rules for Disability. Frieden is author or co-author of more than 60 articles on independent living, disability rights and rehabilitation. He has received two Presidential Citations for his work in the field of disability, and was awarded an honorary doctorate in law by the National University of Ireland in 2004.

Annual awards are given in the following categories:

The Governor's Trophy is the Governor's Committee's highest honor and is awarded to the person who has achieved the highest success in enhancing the empowerment and employment of Texans with disabilities. The Governor's Trophy recognizes long-term commitment and outstanding efforts at both the community and state level.

Employer Awards are given in four categories - Small Employer (25 or fewer employees), Medium Employer (26 to 500 employees), Large Employer (more than 500 employees), and Non-Profit Employer. Each category serves to recognize employers in Texas who have fostered a diverse and accessible workplace and who have developed innovative ways to integrate people with disabilities into the workplace.

The Martha Arbuckle Award recognizes the most innovative local committee project, and is presented in memory of Austin's long-time disability advocate Martha Arbuckle.

The Entrepreneurship Award is awarded to a living entrepreneur with a disability who has shown extraordinary ingenuity and drive to create and sustain a successful business that has created jobs and accessible services. *(no winner for this category in 2011)*



2011 Lex Frieden Employment Award Winners

The Governor's Trophy

Scott Tisdall, [Walgreens](#) (Waxahachie)

Mr. Tisdall, the manager of the Walgreens Distribution Center in Waxahachie, is often contacted by major corporate leaders from all over the U.S. for his advice on hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. He is known for broadening the scope of the ADA accommodations requirements to the highest level, integrating the employees with disabilities comfortably into the culture and environment of the workplace. To bring more hands-on learning to leaders in the business community, Mr. Tisdall encourages educational tours for business managers, community leaders and local school districts. Sign language interpreters, walkie-talkies with texting capabilities, [Ubi-Duos](#), and other technology are common in the Distribution Center, as are such amenities as a mini-workout center, field trips, and other community-building projects and ideas. Mr. Tisdall is also known within the community for his personal efforts and contributions to programs such as day camps, golf tournaments, and accessible transportation.

Large Employer Award

PCSI Inc (Killeen)

Professional Contract Services Inc (PCSI) was founded on the simple premise that people with disabilities, given opportunity and support, will not only be successful, but will excel in the workplace. At PCSI, the mindset is that at the local level, supervisors must be able to effectively communicate with and accommodate employees with disabilities; therefore, supervisors undergo extensive training which gives them the necessary tools to ensure their employees are able to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. PCSI is made up of employees with disabilities from the most entry-level position through the ranks all the way up to administration status, such as those working at corporate headquarters and in on-site supervisory roles. PCSI provides accommodations that range from transportation needs, to cell phones with texting capabilities for communication between employees and supervisors, to necessary time off for specific health needs. "One way in which we create a win-win situation is by going out of our way to make accommodations for our staff," says Vanessa Ferguson of PCSI. "Through our combined efforts, many of our employees have excelled and been recognized locally and nationally."

Medium Employer Award

Johnson Controls (San Antonio)

Johnson Controls San Antonio is a heavy metal fabrication shop which has declared a serious commitment to diversity and inclusion in their practices involving hiring, training, and maintaining employees. The San Antonio office employs a large number of employees who are deaf or hard of hearing, and members of the staff in the Human Resources Department have learned American Sign Language to facilitate communications. The presence of employees with hearing impairments has sparked communication awareness among all the employees at Johnson Controls and has encouraged many of them to voluntarily learn American Sign Language in classes offered onsite. John Rivas of Johnson Controls says, "Our deaf and hard of hearing employees have been dependable and excellent performers. They have adapted well to the requirements and demands of their jobs. The reciprocal benefits have been tremendous and enormously rewarding."



Small Employer Award

Taco Cabana #278 (Austin)

Taco Cabana #278 is dedicated to hiring individuals according to their abilities and strengths. Currently, sign language is used with two employees who are deaf, and positive verbal prompts are used during work assignments for another employee with autism. The manager and staff are all supportive of the role of people with disabilities within their organization, and the three employees with disabilities have shown significant progress in their working skills and social/vocational interactions. The camaraderie and genuine respect among all of the staff from Taco Cabana #278 is an essential part of the work environment.

Non-Profit Employer Award

Laredo Independent School District (Laredo)

Laredo ISD has employees with disabilities in various levels of the school district, including those who work as educators, bookkeepers, office personnel, custodial staff and administrators. All employees have opportunities for advancement to any position in which they are able to perform the essential functions of the job. "Our philosophy and policies extend from recruiting the most highly qualified faculty and staff to addressing the needs of our employees in an effort to retain a highly qualified workforce," says Edna Garza of Laredo ISD. "Our aim is to ensure equal opportunity to all of our employees and to provide the necessary accommodations to ensure this."

Martha Arbuckle Award for a Local Committee

Texas RehabACTION Network (TRAN) of the Coastal Bend (Corpus Christi)

In the three years since its formation, TRAN has used outreach and innovative techniques to inform the population of the Coastal Bend of the existence of a valuable underutilized resource available to the labor market: qualified, well-trained individuals with disabilities, eager to prove their capability to perform well on the job when offered the opportunity. TRAN's primary efforts were the Annual Coastal Bend Walk n Roll Celebration, which began in 2009 by bringing together local branches of organizations such as the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend, and others; and its leading role in organizing the Employers Symposium: "Opening Doors, Creating Opportunities" with special guest speaker Assistant Secretary of Labor Kathleen Martinez. Both programs continued, with increased visibility and participation, in 2010, and will be offered again in 2011.



About the [APA/GCPD Accessibility Awards](#)

Beginning in 2010, the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (GCPD) partnered with the [Accessibility Professionals Association](#) (APA), formerly known as the Texas Registered Accessibility Specialists Association (TRASASA), to create an Accessibility Awards program that recognizes businesses and organizations that go significantly above and beyond the legal requirements of both physical and service accessibility for people with disabilities. Nominations are submitted by accessibility specialists, building owners or managers, or by appreciative citizens. Site visits are made by APA professionals to inspect physical accessibility and by professionals familiar with disability issues to inspect for service accessibility (friendliness of staff, easily accessible accommodations, innovations such as Braille menus, etc.).

Winners of the award are selected in several different categories, including Recreation, Education, Medical and Health Services, Restaurant and Entertainment, and others. Each year the winners are recognized as part of APA's annual meeting in January.

2011 Accessibility Award Winners

Mandolin Gardens Park (Houston)

10310 Summit Bridge Lane

Owner: MUD No. 230; President – Gary Simpson

Design Professional: Talley Landscape Architects, Inc – Merrie Tally

Construction Team: T.F. Harper & Associates, LP

Spanning over 11 acres in a community neighborhood park at a detention basin, Mandolin Gardens Park has two miles of fully accessible trails, all built to a minimum width of 72 inches (the legal standard is 60 inches) in order to be comfortable enough to provide for two wheelchairs to pass throughout the park and for a standard wheelchair to comfortably execute a 180-degree turn at any point in the park. Other design modifications intended to offer a seamless interface between walking and rolling park users include guardrails in the fishing areas with lowered sections to allow a person in a wheelchair to fish with better visibility and easy access; open paved areas adjacent to every bench in addition to the required flat space in front of benches so that a person in a wheelchair can sit next to a person on a bench; fully accessible bulkheads along the basins so that anyone can take part in the "catch and release" fishing; an isolated meditation spot that was built for full accessibility; and a safety ledge that surrounds the basins. The design team emphasized their sense of obligation to provide everyone with an opportunity to enjoy the landscape and environment.

University of Texas at Dallas Student Services Building (Richardson)

800 West Campbell Road

Owner: The University of Texas System Board of Regents

Design Professional: Perkins + Will – Richard Miller, AIA, LEED AP

Construction Team: Hill & Wilkinson – Steve Camp

The new UT Dallas Student Services Building serves as a "one-stop shop" destination for all student service activities, offering 14 different departments under one roof, making access to services easier for all students. The design team had several environmental and accessibility goals, including utilizing space efficiently and safely and providing easy and accessible access to the building and all programs and building areas and spaces. They worked in conjunction with a landscape project to coordinate accessibility campus-wide. All exterior doors have auto-operators. All students with disabilities will visit this building at some point during their career,



so design was focused on creating a welcoming, open, safe and accessible environment, including attractive low barriers around the staircase to prevent people who are blind from bumping into the bottom of the staircase and an accessible bathroom large enough to comfortably accommodate a person in a wheelchair and an attendant. The staff is welcoming, friendly and familiar with disability etiquette.

City of San Antonio Historic River Walk Downtown (San Antonio)

Downtown San Antonio

Owner: City of San Antonio

Design Professional: Beaty Palmer Architects, Inc – Michael Beaty AIA, Principal

Construction Team: Guido Brothers Construction Co – Tom Guido, President

The City of San Antonio began planning of improvements to the Historic River Walk with a specific focus on Universal Accessibility while maintaining the historic fabric and aesthetic ambience that draws people to the setting in the first place. The Master Plan, which began in 1995, developed a comprehensive approach to the elimination of physical barriers and provided a framework for creating universal access. Phase One provided improved pedestrian passage along the River Walk as well as the construction of two new public elevators, and design plans concentrated on hot spots where repairs related to safety and accessibility were addressed and accessible routes to and along the River Walk were extended and restored to its original, historic aesthetic architecture. Phase Two is ongoing, extending the accessibility and design of the entire walk, including lifting and re-setting historic sidewalk panels; elevating and cantilevering new sidewalks to create room for vegetation growth; restoring historic features; and integrating new construction with little or no perceived change, while increasing accessibility. Public tours of the River Walk are provided in both audio and visual formats.



Budget and Encumbrance Report

Appropriation Year 2011*

<u>Budget Item</u>	<u>Operating Budget</u>	<u>Expenditures & Encumbrances</u>
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 251,729	\$ 231,400
Member Travel	\$ 10,500	\$ 7,852
Staff Travel	\$ 10,000	\$ 4,442
Operating Expenses	\$ 24,900	\$ 15,409
Totals:	\$ 297,129	\$ 259,103

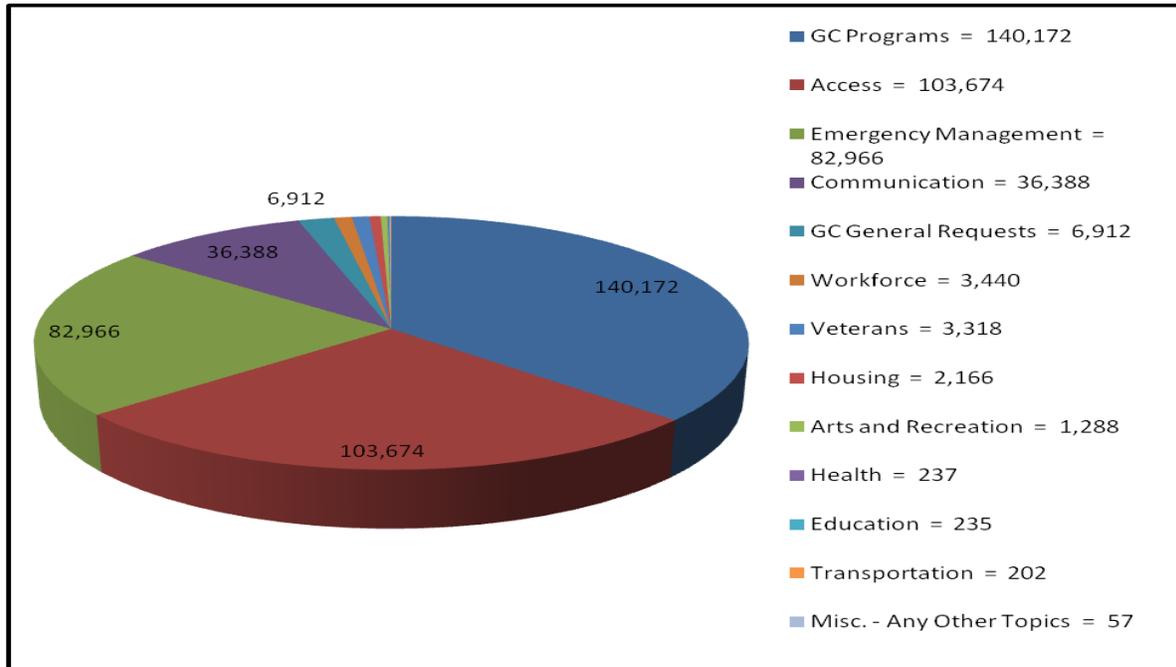
*As of November 30, 2011

Source: Office of the Governor, Budget Division



Technical Assistance Provided to Constituents During 2011

The Committee structures its work into ten broad issue areas. Descriptions of the issue areas are in the appendix. The following statistics were gathered from the *GCPD Constituent Tracking System* for reporting to the Legislative Budget Board.



Total number of technical assistance provided for the calendar year was 381,055.

Detail of Technical Assistance Provided to Constituents During 2011

<u>Issue Areas / Subtopics</u>	<u>Contacts</u>
Committee Programs: 140,172	
Local Committees & Awards (via GovDelivery)	38,991
Disability-related Info Share (i.e.: announcements, events)	21,787
Employment Awards	20,614
Weekly Legislative Reports (via Telicon)	16,074
ADA Roundtable	13,408
Barbara Jordan Media Awards	9,970
ADA Listserv (daily electronic newsletter)	9,426
Disability History / ADA Anniversary (proclamation)	3,152
Local Committees	2,289
APA Awards (Accessibility Professionals Assn.)	1,837
NDEAM Poster or Proclamation	1,694
Annual Survey (original dissemination & analysis distribution)	256
Scoop Training Package	237
Quarterly Committee Meetings	173
Policy Recommendations (to governor & the legislature)	152
Other	108
Courtesy Parking Reminders	4



Access: 103,674

ADA and Accessibility/Disability Rights (via GovDelivery)	102,287
ADA Accessibility Guidelines (federal)	98
Assistance Animal /Rights & Training	561
Member Activities / Public Awareness	152
Architectural Barriers / Texas Accessibility Standards (state)	33
Public Accommodations & Services (ADA Title III)	17
Local & State Governments (ADA Title II)	15
Legal Questions	4
Voting	3
Assistance Animal Discrimination – referral to DOJ	2
Other	2

Arts and Recreation: 1,288

Promoting Inclusion or Accessibility	1,278
Member Activities / Public Awareness	4
Accessibility of Existing Venue	3
Other	3
Construction at Parks & Venues	0

Communications: 36,388

Accessible Technology (via GovDelivery)	29,335
Techlunch (Google group postings & meetings)	6,778
Member Activities / Public Awareness	177
Assistive & Information Technology	88
Website Accessibility	5
DOJ Cases & Settlements	2
Dept of Information Resources & Public Utility Comm. (state)	1
Federal Communications Commission / Section 508 (federal)	1
Other	1

Education: 235

Member Activities / Public Awareness	165
Transition Planning / Advocacy	27
Loans, Grants, Scholarships	14
Reasonable Accommodation	10
Learning Disabilities	8
Texas Education Agency (state)	5
Other	5
Assistive Technology	1

Emergency Management: 82,966

Emergency Management (via GovDelivery)	80,383
Resources or Training	1,850
FEMA	476
Personal Planning	223
Homeland Security or DSHS (state)	29
Communication / Information Technology	2
Local Shelters & Transportation	1
Member Activities / Public Awareness	1
Other	1



Health: 237

Member Activities / Public Awareness	163
Financial Assistance	10
Social Security (SSI, SSDI)	10
DSHS (programs & services)	9
Insurance	9
Other	9
HHSC Ombudsman Referral	8
2-1-1 Hotline (available community services)	7
DARS Programs (DBS, DDS, DHHS, DRS, ECI)	7
DADS (services & support)	5

Housing: 2,166

Financial Assistance	1,518
Utilities	601
Accessible Housing / Reasonable Accommodation	14
Discrimination	8
Modification or Repair	7
Tax Exemptions	7
Other	5
Affordable Housing	2
Member Activities / Public Awareness	2
Texas Dept of Housing & Community Affairs (state)	2

Transportation: 202

Placards or License Plates	79
Parking Lots / # of Spaces / Signage	46
Fines & Laws	33
Drivers License / Resident ID	23
Local Service or Taxicabs	7
Vehicle Modification	4
Financial Assistance	3
Volunteer Parking Programs	3
Other	3
Member Activities / Public Awareness	1

Veterans: 3,318

Veterans with Disabilities (GovDelivery)	3,269
Member Activities / Public Awareness	26
Veterans Affairs, US Dept of (federal)	9
Other	7
Requesting Services	2
Housing Benefits	2
Workforce / TWCs Disability Navigators (state)	2
Texas Veterans Commission (state)	1
Educational Benefits	0
Mental Health	0



Workforce: 3,440

Employment of People with Disabilities (GovDelivery)	2,554
TWC Employment Assistance	616
Member Activities / Public Awareness	195
EEOC Discrimination / Complaints (federal)	19
Work Incentive Programs	18
Reasonable Accommodation (JAN)	12
Entrepreneur & Business	10
Other	10
Workers Compensation	4
Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	2
TWC Civil Rights Div. – Complaints	0

General Requests: 6,912

Members or Ex Officios	5,543
Staff Presentations & Conferences	794
What does GCPD do?	195
Website & Publications (GCPD)	144
Other	41
Legal Assistance	15
Statistics	14
Legislative Inquiries	134
Appointments Process for Potential Members	11
Resources Guide	10
General Financial Assistance (multi issues)	7
Texas Benefits for People with Disabilities	4

Miscellaneous: 57

Non-Disability or Committee Related (referral to other agencies)	33
Referred to OOG Constituent Communications Division	21
Any Other Topic	3

Grand Total: 381,055



Policy and Legislative Recommendations for 82nd Session

Introduction

In its enabling statute the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities [*The Committee*] in Section 115.009 (3) of the [Human Resource Code](#) requires that the Governor's Committee shall: "*before the end of each even-number year, submit to the Governor, and to the Legislature, a report that includes (c) any recommended changes in State laws relating to persons with disabilities.*"

The Committee feels strongly that its recommendations should be based on data which identifies the needs of Texans with disabilities. This past year, three accessible surveys were conducted. In January of 2010, the Committee released its survey called, "[Personal Preparedness Planning of Texans with Disabilities in a Pandemic Influenza Event](#)," and in November of 2010, the Committee released its survey called, "[Needs and Concerns of Veterans with Disabilities in Texas](#)." There were 9,300 veterans across Texas that took the survey with a cumulative 10,410 comments regarding services for veterans. Additionally, over the past nine months leading up to the fall of 2010, citizens across Texas were asked to comment about issues and needs affecting them in all of the Committee's ten issue areas in the "[Citizen Input on Issues related to Texans with Disabilities](#)." The ten issue areas are Access, Communications, Education, Emergency Management, Health, Housing, Recreation, Transportation, Veterans and Workforce. Over 1,900 citizens took the survey and contributed a cumulative 10,832 comments on the ten issue areas. The Committee considered priorities of Texans with a wide variety of disabilities including physical, developmental, mental, sensory and cognitive disabilities.

All surveys and reports led to a better understanding of the current issues affecting Texans with disabilities and to the formation of the reports policy recommendations. The staff and members also collected and reviewed data from its database regarding disability research, emerging trends, the Texas House/Senate interim studies and the analysis of calls and emails from citizens for technical assistance in its database. To analyze trends from citizen comments, we used [Spotfire Analytic software](#) which is single platform predictive analytic software.

Our recommendations strive to leverage strategic federal, state, public and private partnerships to develop resources, reduce fragmentation in the service delivery system, address needs in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, provide choice, and implement strategies that help people remain independent and involved in community life.

Overview

Over the biennium, people with disabilities have seen the passage of the [Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008](#) which brings the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) back into the broad scope of coverage that was the original intent of Congress in its initial passage in July, 1990. Additionally, the [Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines](#) (ADAAG) were issued after ten years of waiting for them to go through the review and comment process. On July 26, 2010, new regulations for [Title II and Title III of the ADA](#) were announced which will allow more consistent model building codes, new requirements for detention and correctional facilities, publicly built residential facilities and for the first time, new requirements for recreational facilities and playgrounds.

Moreover, the Department of Justice announced advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) for four areas under the [new guidelines](#) regarding Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities and Public Accommodations, Movie



Captioning and Video Description, Accessibility of Next Generation 9-1-1, and Equipment and Furniture. On October 8, 2010, the "[Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](#)" was signed into law, which will ensure access for millions of citizens who are deaf or blind to captioning, accessible communication for mobile devices among other provisions.

While important strides have been made, there are several challenges that will face the nation and Texas over the next decade and beyond. Two important challenges will be the aging of the baby boomer generation and the rise in [obesity and obesity related disabilities](#). These two issues are woven throughout the ten issue areas for the committee. Between 2010 and 2050, the United States is projected to experience rapid growth in its older population. In 2050, the number of Americans 65 and older is projected to be 88.5 million, more than double its projected population of 40.2 million in 2010. The baby boomers are largely responsible for this increase in the older population, as they will begin crossing into this category in January 2011.¹

According to Texas State Demographer Steve Murdock in a 2007 House subcommittee hearing, by 2040, Texas population is projected to be between 40-45 million and those 65 years old or older will number between 7-8 million and compose 16-20% of the population. With the aging of Texans and the challenges of age-related disability in next twenty years, it is vital to focus on knowledge utilization and transfer from best practice to implementation to services and supports for citizens.

Obesity in the United States now carries the hefty price tag of \$147 billion per year in direct medical costs, just over 9% of all medical spending. In fact, people who are obese spend almost \$1,500 more each year on health care -- about 40% more than a person of average weight. Beyond those costs are the disability and early deaths caused by obesity.² According to a November 2008, [Texas Department of State Health Services](#) Obesity Data Sheet, nearly 66% of Texas adults were overweight or obese and 32% of Texas high school students were overweight or obese. On October 22, 2010, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a [report](#) which states that the number of Americans with diabetes could triple by 2050. These two issues alone will require significant long range planning on behalf of the State and have specific implications for healthcare, housing, transportation and employment.

With regards to Education, on March 4, 2010, the [Keeping All Students Safe Act](#) was passed by Congress. The Act gives states two years after the establishment of federal standards to develop its own policies, procedures, monitoring and enforcement systems in place to meet the minimum standards. The Committee makes recommendations specific to restraint and seclusion, transition planning, accessible virtual school networks and for improving the school environment for students with disabilities through a comprehensive development of an anti-bullying recommendation.

In 2010, Texas has already had its fair share of disasters and emergencies. We lead the nation in our advancements in many of our emergency management best practices. However, leaning forward we can always improve and seek to better our response to the intricacies of taking care of our vulnerable populations in a disaster.

¹ Vincent, G.K. & Velkoff, V.A. (May 2010). [THE NEXT FOUR DECADES, The Older Population in the United States: 2010 to 2050](#). *Current Population Reports* [P25-1138]. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

² Frieden, T.R., Finklestein, E., & Dietz, W.H. (Speakers). (2009, July 27). [CDC Weight of the Nation Press Briefing](#) (transcript /teleconference audio recording). Washington, DC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



As noted in our current Texas [Homeland Security Plan for 2010-2015](#), while great progress has been made, even more is necessary. Texas will continue to move forward aggressively to prevent the next attack; to protect our people from the scourge of criminal enterprises and terrorists; and to improve preparations for disasters of all types, laying the groundwork to respond with unprecedented speed and effectiveness and begin a comprehensive effort to recover as soon as possible. The Committee makes 27 bold recommendations in this area for consideration.

As we look forward to [livable communities](#), issues related to accessible transportation, [aging in place](#), accessible housing and an aging workforce will be challenging. For most people, the cost, time and effort invested in getting where we need to go are major factors in our everyday life – even more so for people with disabilities. Accessible and affordable transportation systems that are effective, efficient and serve the needs of citizens with disabilities are critical for our Texas future and will help establish a connection to coordinated housing, community living supports and systems and gainful employment.

For the 2011-2013 biennium, the Committee offers 114 recommendations for its ten issue areas which include a “Background and Purpose” section which is meant to give an introduction, background, data and purpose for the following policy recommendations. The policy recommendations are stated in action related terms in order to facilitate any legislation that may stem from them.

In summary, the following policy recommendations attempt to address these issues and many more facing Texans with disabilities with unanimous support of all Committee members. Our recommendations focus on key elements of Texas communities that promote the health, well being, and independence of Texans with disabilities across the age spectrum. The recommendations focus on vital issues important to Texans with disabilities which include:

- providing affordable, appropriate, accessible housing,
- ensuring accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation,
- adjusting the physical and recreational environment for inclusiveness and accessibility,
- increasing work, volunteer, and education opportunities,
- ensuring access to key health and support services, and
- fostering full inclusion & participation in civic, cultural, and social activities.

Policy Recommendations

The Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities offered the following recommendations for the 2011-2013 biennium and the 82nd Legislature:

Access

1. Incorporate into the [Texas Accessibility Standards](#) the new requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) the changes to the main set of guidelines and adopt the Recreational and Play Guidelines for Texas.
2. Revise standards through the [Texas Commission on Jail Standards](#) to comply with the new requirements under the revised and updated ADAAG regarding correctional facilities.



3. Support education throughout Texas regarding the new definition of Service Animals under [the Department of Justice's Regulation Implementing Title II and III of the ADA](#).
4. Enhance the unique characteristics of all counties in Texas by requiring accessible polling places and voting machines for its citizens with disabilities to vote based on the 2010 census for each county.

Communications

1. Enact legislation consistent with federal law that would remove the word "*retarded*" or "*retardation*" from all state documents and replace it with "*persons or people with intellectual disabilities*".
2. Support legislation and efforts to use [People First language](#) to denote the person first and then their disability in any state agency documents.
3. Support the full implementation of the accessibility elements covered in [Section 508](#) for all state agencies and institutions of higher learning, as defined in [HB 2819](#) during the 79th Legislative session (2005).
4. Encourage the revision and promote the adoption of updated federal regulations for information and communication technologies.
5. Promote the awareness of and access to assistive technologies.
6. Encourage increased accessibility of social media and its use among people with disabilities.
7. Promote awareness and knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL) as a secondary language.
8. Explore the need for the [Relay Texas](#) system to have communications assistants with certification in specialized medical and legal fields.
9. Encourage the adoption of a Disability History Month in Texas.
10. Include in the Texas curriculum for students K-12, a comprehensive history regarding the Disability Rights Movement.

Education

1. Require electronic textbooks and any Virtual School Network in Texas be developed in such a way that students with a variety of disabilities have equal access to all materials and instructions by teachers.
2. Require parents be informed personally and in writing regarding policies of the schools behavior management or modification program and provide written consent prior to implementation.
3. Require the successful completion of Preventative Management of Aggressive Behavior (PMAB) or similar training prior to coming in contact with children and follow-up with periodic retraining of all staff.
4. Encourage school districts in their strategic long range planning to design and construct accessible facilities that facilitate the developmental needs of children.
5. Prohibit any seclusion or restraint that restricts breathing or the denial of access to basic needs such as water, food, clothing, and/or toilet facilities.
6. Prohibit schools from including restraint or seclusion as planned intervention in a students Individualized Education Plan (IEP).



7. Require schools to notify parents after emergency use of physical restraint or seclusion and establish a review panel of educators, diagnosticians and administrators to review the appropriateness of each case of restraint or seclusion in consultation with the child or adolescent and his or her family, including how the incident could have been avoided.
8. Enact legislation that would require individualized person-centered and meaningful transition planning to begin at age 13.
9. Develop psychosocial screening and planning tools that look at skill sets, needs and desires of students with disabilities.
10. Develop outcome based transition standards which build in accountability on the delivery of services.
11. Create an accessible electronic and manual comprehensive guide for students with disabilities and parents that outlines the timeframes and services provided by Texas beginning at age 13 which is updated biennially.
12. Direct the Texas Education Agency to create a Transition Specialist Training Program that is consistent across all districts.
13. Increase the funding of programs that train and help cover the cost of higher education for Texans training to become either Teachers of Visually Impaired or Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS).
14. Enact Legislation that would require individuals with teacher certifications to receive proper training and education regarding visual impairment prior to working with students with visual impairments.
15. Explore ways to support the development of undergraduate visual impairment education programs.
16. Strengthen existing laws on the education of students with visual impairments.
17. Require that teachers of students with visual impairments successfully complete all course work required by the State Board for Educator Certifications Approved Preparation Program and pass both State Board for Educator Certification exams in Braille and Visual Impairments for certification in Texas.
18. Develop a comprehensive educational long range anti-bullying program for all public schools in Texas grades K-12.

Emergency Management

1. Designate a full-time Texas Emergency Management Disability Coordinator with extensive disability issues expertise under the Texas Division of Emergency Management to develop a statewide plan for Texans with disabilities that is incorporated into the overall emergency management plan for Texas.
2. Designate in each of the 24 Council of Governments (COGs) a regional Disability Coordinator who works with the community and a regional Advisory Committee on issues directly related to the community of people with disabilities.
3. Establish a statewide Texas Advisory Committee on Disabilities and Disasters, with the primary mission of addressing the full life cycle of emergency management—preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation—and how each phase relates to Texans with disabilities.



4. Utilize technology to provide accessible webinars, materials and reports relevant to emergency management and issues related to Texans with disabilities.
5. Support the dedication of an annual conference on disability issues and emergency management for Texas.
6. Encourage state enforcement of guidelines for broadcasters, cable operators, and satellite television services to comply with the equal access to public warnings requirement for [Emergency Alert System](#).
7. Encourage the Texas Association of Broadcasters to educate programming distributors, broadcasters, cable operators, and satellite television services, about their obligation to make emergency information accessible to people with hearing and vision disabilities, and that it act immediately on violations.
8. Explore ways for emergency management and healthcare professionals to use the power of social media tools such as [Twitter](#), [Delicious](#), [Apps.gov](#), YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, blogs and others to create avenues for real-time information gathering and distribution regarding emergency challenges for Texans with disabilities.
9. Establish a state task force on disaster-related fixed and mobile temporary housing that meets universal design principles and accessibility guidelines, and involve disability organizations in planning for housing options that are consistent with the new [National Disaster Housing Strategy](#).
10. Encourage further development of the [HUD National Locator System](#) for accessible rental units and the expediting of vouchers in disaster areas for people with disabilities.
11. Implement programs to ensure that first responders can understand and meet the needs of Texans with psychiatric disabilities by exploring the possibility of including in the [Radiant RFID](#) and [Special Needs Evacuation Tracking System](#) technology wristbands that denote medication names and dosages for people with psychiatric disabilities who cannot administer their own medications.
12. Examine ways to allow health and mental health professionals to provide voluntary treatment during emergencies and disasters that would decrease potential legal liability by amending or strengthening Good Samaritan laws.
13. Examine ways to perform pre-disaster credentialing and registration of volunteer health and mental health professionals in Texas and its neighboring states.
14. Identify ways to allow healthcare providers to prescribe two weeks of critical care medication in a disaster event and ways that private entities, Medicaid and Medicare would reimburse for it.
15. Ensure oversight of the effective evacuation of individuals with medical special needs in congregate care facilities.
16. Explore the use of virtual world technology as a way of training emergency management professionals regarding disaster related scenarios.
17. Require state and local [Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster \(VOADs\)](#) and [Texas Citizen Corps](#) to increase membership of disability organizations and volunteers with disabilities in all phases of disaster planning.
18. Require that each state agency providing services to any Texan with a disability to discuss an individualized emergency preparedness and evacuation plan with the individual and his or her family.



19. Explore the possibility of implementing a [Next Generation 911](#) system for Texas.
20. [Map at-risk populations](#) in settings where significant numbers of Texans with disabilities live together, such as long term care and assisted living facilities, schools of special education, hospitals, group homes, [State Supported Living Centers](#) and [State Hospitals](#).
21. Ensure the inclusion of providers of home and community-based health-related services such as personal care attendants, direct support staff, paraprofessionals, itinerant therapists and others providing [Activities of Daily Living \(ADL\)](#) support who have close and consistent contact with people with disabilities and those providing healthcare support services in [day and residential programs for people with disabilities](#) in the same priority as health care personnel who have priority for vaccinations during a pandemic event.
22. Ensure that prioritization of debris removal and utility restoration is provided to areas that serve people with disabilities in congregate and residential living facilities.
23. Examine ways for individuals to register in Texas 2-1-1 Registry through local utilities such as electrical service providers.
24. Examine ways the State can promptly reimburse public organizations which exhausted critical resources during disasters for any donated equipment, food or medical supplies.
25. Rebuild any infrastructure destroyed during a disaster in an accessible manner, to the greatest extent possible, using the newly adopted Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).
26. Require a disability-focused performance evaluation and assessment for all state exercises and disaster responses as standard operating procedure for after-action reports.
27. Explore the use of [telemedicine](#) for emergency management response to natural or disease related disasters.

Health

1. Promote professional training of healthcare practitioners on disability competency issues for people with physical, mental or cognitive disabilities in order to receive appropriate and effective healthcare.
2. Promote increased access for people with disabilities to facilities, programs and services from healthcare providers.
3. Increase healthcare coverage for respite, specialty care, long-term services, prescription medications, durable medical equipment, and assistive technologies in healthcare planning.
4. Establish a long-term plan to develop accessible community-based programs to increase physical activity and improve nutrition throughout the state to reduce chronic disabilities caused by obesity.
5. Implement community programs, services and education throughout Texas for smoking and tobacco cessation.
6. Support health care reform in Texas that would increase the number of insured Texans and decrease underinsured Texans while maintaining access to quality medical care with a strong emphasis on prevention and individual choice.
7. Support efforts to help small employers offer health care insurance to their employees.



8. Implement policies and procedures for all State Supported Living Centers that provide for pre-employment, periodic and ongoing criminal history checks on all employees for in state and out of state criminal history.
9. Require pre-admission and annual complete physical and nutritional needs workup on all residents of State Supported Living Centers.
10. Support efforts to provide Transition Medicine Clinics in Texas to meet the needs of children who transition from Children's Medicaid to adult medical services.
11. Support the universal design of medical facilities and examination tables, diagnostic equipment and devices to benefit all people, including people with various types of disabilities.
12. Encourage a multifaceted, coordinated plan between state authorities, county jails, public and private mental health authorities/providers to diagnosis and treat offenders with mental illness in the most appropriate, therapeutic setting.
13. Support efforts to implement the August [2010 Texas Department of State Health Services Continuity of Care Task Force Report](#) recommendations.
14. Encourage legislative budget writers to be mindful that short-term cost savings realized from cuts in funding for needed mental health services can actually result in much greater costs overall to the State.
15. Encourage the development of programs to facilitate the early identification and diagnoses of mental illnesses and linkages to appropriate and effective treatment options.
16. Explore the use of [telemedicine](#) to assist healthcare practitioners as a tool to serve the increasing demographic numbers of people with disabilities in Texas.

Housing

1. Explore options to provide permanent, affordable housing or supported housing for individuals with physical, mental or cognitive disabilities.
2. Develop long-range regional planning for transit-oriented developments which are pedestrian friendly, offer a wide range of housing options and include accessible transportation to condensed concentrated services.
3. Support state efforts that would remove the institutional bias of Medicaid and/or Medicare and drive funding toward [aging in place initiatives](#) for aging Texans.

Recreation

1. Support inclusion of people with disabilities in recreational programs, activities, and venues.
2. Promote the needs and preferences of people with disabilities in the design and development of recreational services, programs, facilities, and functions, and encourage prompt compliance with the revised [2010 federal accessibility guidelines for recreational facilities](#).
3. Incorporate [universal design and accessibility](#) into the long-range planning of state parks, public beaches and other recreational opportunities for Texans with disabilities.
4. Encourage state educational authorities and local school administrators to provide recreational opportunities in and outside of school for students at increased risk for physical inactivity, including children with disabilities.



Transportation

1. Encourage the principles of [Livable Communities](#) in the long range regional planning and development of communities in Texas which includes accessible transportation options.
2. Encourage communities in Texas to implement long term strategies for [transit-oriented, mixed use development](#) that would provide accessible, safe, reliable, and affordable transportation choices for Texans with disabilities in order to obtain employment, healthcare, housing and other needed services.
3. Encourage local public transit programs to direct funding to improved accessible program design, including rural and Para Transit programs.
4. Support state and local government efforts for aggressive coordination of accessible and affordable transportation, resources and services for Texans with disabilities.
5. Encourage public and private entities to voluntarily increase the percentage of accessible parking spaces above the federal minimum guidelines.

Veterans

1. Create a marketing and information program for returning veterans that educates them on all services available in Texas through the Texas Veterans Commission.
2. Foster efforts to utilize social media and the internet to provide a communication network of services for veterans with disabilities.
3. Promote the use of accessible and usable technology to help veterans self-assess what services and resources are available to them through the Texas Veterans Commission.
4. Develop a comprehensive psychosocial screening process for current and returning veterans that would help identify veterans who are at high risk of homelessness due to a physical, mental or cognitive disability.
5. Support public and private initiatives in Texas to screen returning male and female soldiers for Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and make information and resources available that are necessary for rehabilitation, transition, and return to work and home in the community.
6. Support the collaborative efforts of state and federal agencies to improve the timeliness, ease of application, and delivery of services and benefits to Texas veterans.
7. Support the collaborative efforts of state and federal agencies to provide a variety of quality long-term care options for aging Texas veterans.
8. Support efforts to develop a continuum of housing options for returning veterans.
9. Develop a multi-agency, comprehensive long term strategy in Texas to address the mental health needs of current and returning veterans.
10. Promote the use of [telemedicine](#) to assist in providing health and mental health services to current and returning veterans in Texas.
11. Explore ways to promote employment of current and returning veterans in Texas.
12. Increase access for female veterans to female related health services including mental health trauma care.
13. Support efforts to provide accessible transportation to and from VA medical facilities, especially for rural areas.



Workforce

1. Educate state entities on reasonable accommodations for state employees with disabilities.
2. Support efforts in Texas to increase revenue and manpower to Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to fulfill the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the collaborative efforts of the One-Stop-Career Centers.
3. Revise the definition of [Historically Underutilized Businesses](#) (HUB) to include people with disabilities.
4. Reverse the persistently high percentages of people with disabilities who are not working but are ready, willing and able to work by requiring the Workforce Investment Board plan for Texas to determine how to most effectively serve Texans with disabilities.
5. Require the Texas Workforce Investment Plan to provide technical assistance and quality monitoring to improve and maintain accessibility of One-Stop Career Centers in all workforce investment areas and provide detailed criteria for assessing whether equal access has been provided.
6. Support long term workforce strategic planning in Texas to fully tap the qualified and underutilized pool of workers with disabilities.
7. Educate employers on providing reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities.
8. Support continued funding and expansion of the Texas Disability Navigator Program.
9. Develop a system of communication regarding job opportunities and available employment resources for skilled workers with disabilities.
10. Develop a Texas long range plan for 2011 to 2030 to address staff shortages or gaps in the disability services support infrastructure based on the aging baby boomer population.
11. Ensure all State and Local government websites provide a fully accessible job application process.
12. Promote accessible emerging workforce technologies.
13. Expand tax incentives for employers to hire and retain individuals with disabilities.
14. Develop an educational campaign to improve employers' knowledge about the financial benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities or returning them to work.



Staff and Member Accomplishments

Executive Director, Angela English

This past year has been an active time of reaching out to various organizations for mutual partnerships, seeking win-win opportunities for all concerned. Additionally, the Committee produced its policy report for the 82nd Legislative Session which was well received by citizens and legislators as a guiding document on the important and salient issues related to Texans with disabilities.

Highlights of 2011

Participated in conference calls with the 2011 planning committee for the 2011 [Southwest Disability Conference in](#) Albuquerque, New Mexico. The 2011 theme will be "Inclusion"

Participated in monthly conference calls with the National Association of Governors' Committees on People with Disabilities ([NAGC](#))

Attended the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services Division of Blind Services' Annual Conference luncheon in honor of Judy C. Scott, former Chair of our Committee. Judy was honored on the DARS Division of Blind Services Wall of Fame.

Completed the analysis of the Veterans with Disabilities in Texas survey and sent the analysis out through the same channels that we had originally asked for comment, and posted the results on our website

Participated in monthly Region IV FEMA Disability Integration Collaborative calls that are used to discuss various aspects of emergency management planning for people with disabilities in the Region VI FEMA area which is Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico

Attended the [Texas Children in Nature Network](#) to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in nature activities

Coordinated with the [Texas Association of Registered Accessibility Specialists](#) and Jo Virgil on the new Accessibility Awards

Finalized and submitted the 2011-2013 Policy Recommendations for the 82nd Legislative Session to the administration for review and approval. The recommendations are posted to the Committee's website

Disseminated weekly legislative reports to members and citizens on pre-filed bills from November to January 11th

Over the past year met with various representatives at TDEM and other organizations about issues related to functional needs and supports integration for people with disabilities in emergency management

Made a presentation to Texas veterans on bills related to veterans with disabilities at the Texas Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America quarterly meeting in January 2011

Met with Sharron Rush of [Knowbility](#) to discuss accessibility issues related to Virtual School Network in Texas



Met twice a month for day-long meetings with the Texas Department of Emergency Management on the [Texas Functional Needs Support Services \(FNSS\) plan](#) and produced subsequent tools for a FNSS Toolkit for local emergency managers

Conducted an ADA Roundtable on Accessible Parking in Texas in collaboration with Bruce Elfant, Constable Precinct 5, and Tammera Parr-Lamb from Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

Attended the Memorandum of Agreement signing ceremony with [FEMA and the National Disability Rights Foundation](#) regarding the inclusion of people with Disabilities in emergency management at the White House

Tracked legislation during the 82nd legislative session related to the Committee's ten issue areas and sent out weekly reports to Committee members and to members of the public who requested the reports

Provided technical assistance to members who provided information related to specific bills within their chosen issue areas

Facilitated meeting with Dr. Lex Frieden and technology experts and other stakeholders with disabilities in Austin to talk about his recent appointment charge with the University of Texas Fellowship

Participated in five teleconference calls for FEMA's Local, State, Tribal and Federal Preparedness Task Force on various aspects of national preparedness

Attended the [FEMA Local, State, Tribal and Federal Preparedness Task Force](#) meeting in Monterey, California, July 17-20, to discuss the [Presidential Policy Directive 8](#) and the Threat Hazard and Incident Review Assessment for national preparedness

Facilitated a Listening Session in Austin with [Marcie Roth, Director of the FEMA Disability Integration Coordination Office](#) for State and Local emergency management professionals

Participated in coordination calls with the New Mexico Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities, the New Mexico Center on Excellence, and Sharron Rush, Knowledge, related to the planning of the Southwest Disability Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on October 4-8, 2011

Facilitated with Joe Bontke, Ombudsman for Houston Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) an Austin ADA Roundtable with [Peggy Mastronianni](#), Associate Legal Counsel in the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Office of Legal Counsel, on the "ADA Amendments Act and Reasonable Accommodations"

Attended the FEMA Local, State, Tribal and Federal Task Force meeting in Washington on September 13-16, to finalize the work on the Presidential Policy Directive 8 and the National Preparedness Goal. The Task Force is now decommissioned.

Participated in teleconferencing regarding the Alliance agreement work between the National Association of Governors' Committees on People with Disabilities and the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy



Worked with the Texas Department of Public Safety on formulating a committee for implementation of AMBER alerts for Texans with intellectual disabilities

Facilitated a wording change on the <http://www.Texas.gov> emergency management web page from “special needs,” to “people who have access and functional needs,” to be consistent with the Texas Functional Needs Support Services Plan

Set up and implemented a GovDelivery system for the Governor's Committee with six bulletin topic areas: 1) Accessible Technology, 2) Emergency Management, 3) ADA Accessibility and Disability Rights, 4) Local Committees and Awards, 5) Employment of People with Disabilities, and 6) Veterans with Disabilities

Facilitated a partnership with the [Southwest Disability Technical Assistance Center](#) on accessible webinars through their [Talking Communities platform](#). Erin Lawler is the project manager.

Gave a presentation in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the Southwest Disability Conference on the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Emergency Management Planning

Hosted TechLunch Meetings the first Wednesday of every month of 2011. TechLunch is an informal networking group of individuals from public and private companies that are interested in accessible technology solutions for people with disabilities

Facilitated the “*Disability History Factoids*” each day in October, highlighting the contributions of Texans with disabilities to our Texas history

Participated in weekly conference calls on the development of the National Disaster Response Framework and on the subcommittee for Persons with Access and Functional Needs



Community Outreach & Public Information Annual Report, Jo Virgil

Building a stronger network of Local Committees and organizations across the State has helped improve all of our outreach programs. This year the number of community supporters on our email and contact lists has increased to more than 250 contacts in the Local Committee email database, and more than 1,100 in the GovDelivery list. Our recently created Quarterly Calendar of Events, posted on our website, has encouraged Local Committees and other organizations to get the word out about their own events, and to get ideas for more community involvement.

Our network of Local Committees and Community Supporters has provided us with valuable information and contact within communities across the State. Members of committees have worked with us on site visits for our accessibility awards program, information on media presentations for our media awards, nominations for businesses and individuals for our employment awards, and outreach to artists for our NDEAM poster art competition, as well as providing an effective distribution for relevant information from our office to the general public. They have also kept us informed on local issues and programs for people with disabilities, allowing us to constantly update our understanding of potential suggestions for legislation, as well as add to our growing list of resources for people with disabilities. Local committees address a wide range of areas, including housing, transportation, employment, education and access. They also bring a wide range of entities together including individuals, local public agencies and officials, non-profit organizations and private businesses.

Currently, we have 42 formal Local Committees, as well as other organizations that act in a less formal capacity but also participate in our network. Our formal list of Local Committees which have links to their websites is available on our website:

- [Abilene Disability Advisory Committee](#)
- [Alamo Area Disability Alliance](#)
- [Alvin Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Amarillo Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities](#)
- Aransas Pass Mayors Committee on People with Disabilities (*no website*)
- [Arlington Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Austin Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Beaumont Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Bell County Judges and Commissioners Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Brownsville Workforce Solutions](#)
- [Bryan/College Station Mayor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities](#)
- Cameron County-Harlingen/Brownsville Area (*no website*)
- [Corpus Christi Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Dallas Mayor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities](#)
- [Denton Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [El Paso Accessibility Advisory Committee](#)
- [Fort Worth Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Garland Therapeutic Recreation Program](#)
- Georgetown Commission on People with Disabilities (*no website*)
- [Grand Prairie Disabled Service Committee](#)
- [Houston Mayor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities](#)
- [Houston Mayor's Office on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Irving Advisory Committee on Disability](#)
- Jasper County East Texas Committee for People with Disabilities (*no website*)
- [La Porte Special Populations Organized Recreation Therapy \(SPORT\)](#)

- [Laredo Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Leander Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Lubbock Community Relations Commission Disability Subcommittee](#)
- McAllen Mayors Committee on People with Disabilities (*no website*)
- [Mesquite Transportation for the Elderly and Disabled](#)
- [Nacogdoches Mayors Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Odessa ABLE Center](#)
- [Pasadena Verne Cox Center](#)
- Port Arthur Mayors Committee on People with Disabilities (*no website*)
- [San Angelo Disability Awareness](#)
- [San Antonio - Disability Access Office](#)
- [San Antonio – DisAbility.org](#)
- [Texoma Council of Governments](#)
- [Tyler Disabilities Issue Review Board](#)
- [Waco Mayor's Committee on Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- [Wharton Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#)
- [Wichita Falls Commission on Human Needs](#)

Our awards programs continue to raise visibility and “up the bar” on public awareness and appreciation for disability issues. The 2011 Barbara Jordan Media Awards had 108 submissions – a record high. The award has ensured that media professionals and journalism students are increasingly aware of the preferred criteria in producing stories on people with disabilities, which makes for better stories *and* better public awareness.

This year we re-named our Employment Awards to honor Lex Frieden, a long-time disability rights champion, and Dr. Frieden attended the awards ceremony to give the keynote speech. We are working on the production of bronze medallions with Lex Frieden's profile to present as the physical award to future winners. Outreach for the Lex Frieden Employment Awards also increased this year, doubling the number of submissions received last year.

Our partnership with the Accessibility Professionals Association on the APA/GCPD Accessibility Award was a success in its first year, and is gaining momentum and visibility for the upcoming January 2012 award.

Our NDEAM Poster Art competition is also responding to outreach efforts, resulting in 23 submissions this year. Overall, we distributed more than 2,500 posters to various businesses and organizations in Texas and in other states. This October, for the first time, we offered a public art exhibit in the Capitol of all the original artwork and the resulting NDEAM posters since 1999, and a virtual art exhibit is still available on our website.

With the help of our tech department, we have also updated our website, made award entry forms easier to access and submit, posted our *SCOOP on Reporting about People with Disabilities* training video for journalism students on iTunesU through the Texas Education Agency, and organized our pages and information so that it is more user-friendly.



Program Highlights

Local Committees

Regularly corresponded with Local Committees across the State for continual outreach for our awards ceremonies, our Quarterly Calendar of Events, emergency management information to be locally distributed, updates on legislation, survey participation, etc.

Contacted all main Local Committee Chairs to update information on the committee, including any changes in leadership or mission statement

Completely revised the Local Committee Handbook, adding updated organizational examples, suggestions for activities and local outreach, information on etiquette, links to resources, etc

Attended regular meetings of the Austin Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities and met with other Local Committees across the State to talk about GCPD activities, including the Dallas Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities, the Houston Mayor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, and the Bell County Commission on People with Disabilities

Spoke with contacts in various communities about getting a new Local Committee started, including North Richland Hills, Round Rock, Georgetown, Waxahachie, Odessa, Alpine, and Lufkin

Attended Local Committee Awards Ceremony hosted by the Bell County Commission on People with Disabilities and by the Houston Mayor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities

Created and distributed our four annual Quarterly Calendar of Events featuring a total of about 750 statewide events, activities and training of interest to people with disabilities or professionals in the field of disability issues; had each posted to our website

Regularly worked with Local Committees on suggestions for nominations for our awards programs and outreach for NDEAM poster artists

Awards Programs

Oversaw the solicitation and organization of submissions and coordinated the judging process for the annual Barbara Jordan Media Awards, the Lex Frieden Employment Awards, and the APA/GCPD Accessibility Awards

Met with folks from the University of Texas in the Services for Students with Disabilities, the Journalism Department, the RTF Department, and the UT Student Government several times to plan and implement the Barbara Jordan Media Awards ceremony, including lining up the photographer, videographer, keynote speaker and emcee

Met with Raul Tello of the Houston Mayor's Committee and Tyrone Shoemaker of Greater Houston Business and Leadership Network to talk about their hosting the 2012 Lex Frieden Employment Awards



Met with Dr. Bruce Smith and Susan Hanson at Texas State University in San Marcos to talk about and confirm our partnership on our 2012 Barbara Jordan Media Awards

Put out a Call for Entries for the 2011 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Poster Art competition and oversaw and organized the submission process, organization and judging process, as well as the design and printing of the poster

Worked with the staff to mail out 2,500 NDEAM posters across the State to various businesses and organizations

Met with Austin Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities chairperson Norman Kieke and his Employment Awards Ceremony committee several times to coordinate and plan our partnership on the October 2011 Lex Frieden Employment Awards

Worked with Committee Chair Joe Bontke, Angi English, and Nancy Van Loan on the creation and future purchase of medallions for winners of the Lex Frieden Employment Awards

Worked with the State Preservation Board to arrange for an NDEAM Art Exhibit in the Capitol Ground Floor Rotunda, featuring all our NDEAM posters and the original artwork; did outreach to promote the exhibit

Worked with the Accessibility Professionals Association (APA) on specifics for our annual APA/GCPD Accessibility Award presentation; lined up visits to nominated venues by Local Committee members and individuals familiar with disability and service accessibility issues; created a list of suggested guidelines for the visit to determine service accessibility

Created email databases for outreach for the Barbara Jordan Media Awards, the Lex Frieden Employment Awards, the APA/GCPD Accessibility Awards, our Q-Cals and the NDEAM Poster Art Competition

Updated our brochures about the GCPD and related programs, added new member information and updates to awards program criteria and submission processes.

Website and Document Updates

Worked with Office of the Governor's tech staff to have *The SCOOP* video and documents for journalism students posted on our website and to the iTunesU website; sent notification of its availability to Local Committees, Texas Education Agency, Education Services Centers, etc.

Worked with our staff and the tech department to update all our web page information on the Barbara Jordan Media Awards, the Lex Frieden Employment Awards, the APA/GCPD Accessibility Awards, the NDEAM Poster, and the Local Committees, as well as to create separate pages for *The Scoop*, Local Committee Formation Guidelines, and public access to pdf files of all our brochures



Worked with our staff and the tech department to post current and previous award winners and NDEAM posters on the appropriate web pages, to make the Submission Guidelines and Entry Forms fully accessible and fillable, and to organize the Navigation Sidebar to be more user-friendly

Created fillable documents for Entry Forms for Barbara Jordan Media Awards, Lex Frieden Employment Awards, and NDEAM Art Competition; also simplified the nomination form for the Lex Frieden Employment Awards to encourage third-party nominations

Posted new Quarterly Calendars of Events every quarter, for a total of about **750 event listings**

Updated our brochures on the GCPD and related programs, adding new member information and updates to awards program criteria and the submission process

Outside Events, Presentations and Outreach

Met with the Dallas Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities as their featured speaker for January; discussed potential Local Committee activities, networking and partnerships

Attended the Awards Ceremony hosted by the Bell County Commission on People with Disabilities and gave a welcome from the GCPD

Made a presentation to the audience at Seton Hospitals annual Seton Expo in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Taught four different sessions of graduate classes at the University of Texas on People First language, the ADA and related legislation, and our awards programs

Helped plan and emcee two ADA Roundtable events – one on Accessible Parking and one on Developmental Disabilities

Attended the Barbara Jordan Week luncheon at the University of Texas LBJ Library featuring keynote speaker Senator Rodney Ellis

Attended the Goodwill Industries of Central Texas Hall of Honor dinner

Spoke to the Bell County Commission on People with Disabilities to talk about GCPD programs and awards

Attended two Texas Workforce Commission's Disability Navigator conferences; addressed the audience at one

Attended the August meeting in Houston of the Greater Houston Business Leadership Network

Attended the ceremonial Torch Run for Texas Special Olympics on the South Steps of the Capitol

Served as speaker at the meeting of the Texas Rehabilitation Council of Texas



Coordinated information for a story in the Dallas Monthly News magazine on our NDEAM Poster Art winner, Patricia Hiebeler

Wrote press releases for our awards ceremonies and art exhibit to run by the Governor's Press Office for public release

Set up GovDelivery email account for distribution of information to people about our activities, events and programs

Continuing Education Classes and Training

Attended classes in Formatting Word Documents; Fraud Awareness; Making Accessible PDF Documents; Creating Accessible Word Documents; Word Forms and Macros; Writing in Simple Language; and Public Information Act/Ethics Training



Accessibility and Disability Rights Coordinator, Erin Lawler

Erin Lawler, Accessibility and Disability Rights Coordinator, furthered the Committee's mission to serve as a central source of information on the rights of people with disabilities. Ms. Lawler is committed to making the often confusing subject of disability rights accessible to Texans with disabilities and their families. To that end, Ms. Lawler conducted a comprehensive legislative analysis and website update during the summer of 2011. She brought the "Texas Key Laws" section of the Committee's website up-to-date, to include legislation passed during the 82nd session, and revised explanations of existing law for accuracy and readability. Ms. Lawler has also written technical assistance documents on subjects of particular interest to Texans with disabilities: laws relating to accessible parking and service animals. These documents are written in a question-and-answer format, designed to be easily understood and useable.

Ms. Lawler also engages constituents directly through programming and events. She hosted two successful Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) events in 2011, both designed to address topical issues of interest to Texans with disabilities. The first event, held in September, explained how the recent amendments to the ADA will affect employees with disabilities as they seek accommodations at work. The second event, held in December, responded to daunting financial and legal questions of long-term planning for people with disabilities. Both of these events took place online, using the accessible Talking Communities platform, allowing for hundreds of participants across at least five states. In partnership with Professor Lex Frieden, Ms. Lawler also hosted an accessible survey on how Texans with disabilities use assistive technology. With Angi English, Ms. Lawler hosts the monthly TechLunch networking event and hosted a group of high school students from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired on a tour of the Capitol.

Ms. Lawler uses her legal understanding to provide high-level technical assistance to other state agencies on diverse questions of disability law. She served on a working group tasked with crafting the definitions of "intellectual disability" and "pervasive developmental disorder" to be used in implementing the state's new Endangered Missing Person Alert system. Based on her contributions to this working group, Ms. Lawler was invited to serve on the Steering Committee that oversees all of the state-wide alert programs, including the AMBER, Blue, and Silver Alerts. She provides subject matter expertise to the Functional and Access Needs Support Services working group at the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) and the newly-formed Disability Stakeholders Advisory Group, also through TDEM, especially on the legal authorities of inclusive emergency management and the non-discrimination principles of law. Ms. Lawler also follows legal issues of information and communication technology accessibility. She serves as a standing member of the Electronic and Information Resources Accessibility Council of Texas (ACT) and helped to organize a working group to analyze proposed changes to federal regulations related to web accessibility.

Ms. Lawler is a credentialed mediator and has found that the skills she uses as a mediator are often exercised in her one-on-one contact with constituents. Since June of 2011, Ms. Lawler has provided personalized assistance to almost 200 constituents by phone or email.

2011 Highlights (a sample of activities since date of hire, June 27, 2011)

Gave personalized assistance and referrals to almost 200 constituents over the phone or by email



Hosted two ADA Roundtable events (webcasts), *The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act and Reasonable Accommodations Changes*, September 1, 2011, and *Long-term Planning for People with Disabilities*, December 5, 2011

Reviewed and summarized over 75 disability-related bills from the 82nd Legislative Session, creating technical summaries for office use and simpler summaries for use on the Committee website

Continually monitored trends in disability law and issues relating to people with disabilities to keep website up-to-date, to share with staff when relevant, and to research and file for possible use in policy recommendations

Participated in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) working group on refining current FEMA guidance relating to the integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of emergency management; contributed editorial revisions to working definitions of relevant emergency management terms for use in FEMA guidance

Provided technical assistance in two working group sessions hosted by the Department of Public Safety to develop definitions and criteria for the new Endangered Missing Person Alert System (broadcast when a person with an intellectual or pervasive developmental disorder is missing)

Served as a subject-matter expert on disability law for members of the Functional Needs and Support Services working group at the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) and for members of the newly-formed Disability Stakeholders Advisory Committee at TDEM

Publicized Texas' first-ever Persons with Disabilities History and Awareness Month by sending out daily "Disability History Factoids" throughout the month of October and posting dozens of resources to the Committee's website

Served as a standing member of the Electronic and Information Resources Accessibility Council of Texas (ACT), an interagency work group to promote the ongoing improvement of the methods by which state agencies make electronic and information resources accessible to people with disabilities; participated in monthly ACT meetings; helped to organize a working group to review the upcoming refresh to guidance on section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (pertaining to web accessibility)

Used legal background to benefit the Committee by working with General Counsel's office to draft a disclosure statement to accompany the Committee staffs contact information on the website and on nominating forms for awards programs, making readers aware of the requirements of the Public Information Act; continually assisted in office compliance with Public Information Requests



Engaged constituents by surveying Texans with disabilities on their use of accessible technology (collaboration with Professor Lex Frieden of University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston); hosted monthly "Tech Lunch" networking sessions for accessible technology professionals with Angi English; provided information on the Committee and its services at an annual "Transition Fair," hosted by 11 school districts; hosted high school students from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired on a tour of the Capitol with Angi English

Represented the staff of the Committee at numerous disability stakeholder events and conferences, covering legal issues, housing, promoting independence initiatives, accessible technology, volunteerism, and leadership, among others

Pursued dozens of continuing education opportunities in disability rights law and related topics



Committee Members Reports on Outreach Activity

Joe Bontke

Provided welcoming remarks for a Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas conference, "Finding Housing Opportunities for People with Disabilities"

Provided Santa at the Rosedale School for children with multiple disabilities as Committee Chair

Alan R. Babin, Jr.

The Washington Post featured an article on Alan R. Babin, Jr., "[Whatever Happened to the Wounded Soldier](#)", as a follow up to "The Wounds of War," originally published in 2004

David Fowler

Participated in "[Access to the Skies](#)" discussions. He commented, after the merger of Continental Airlines and United Airlines, the now "largest airline" in the air travel industry is planning to incorporate a variety of concerns from the community of persons with disabilities. David Fowler discussed the increased numbers of people with disabilities who will fly, especially baby boomers accustomed to traveling. Judy Scott noted ongoing major accessibility projects at Parkland Hospital and Love Field in Dallas under the leadership of Kristi Thomas from Accessology, Inc.

Participated in multiple VA in-patient hospital visits and Texas PVA Forums in San Antonio and Houston

Attended an event of Friends of the Houston Metro Multi-service Center

Coordinated meetings of the Texas Chapter PVA

Reported a new special criminal court addressing veterans' issues has been set up in Harris County. Brian Shannon added this year's president of the Texas State Bar, Terry Tottenham, has a primary initiative - Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans - that will provide free legal clinics and basic services

PVAs online newsletter, *Paraplegia News* featured David Fowler. The article was titled "Ensuring proper delivery of SCI/D healthcare depends on an expanding group of trained professionals coming together as an interdisciplinary team."

Sent letters on Texas PVA letterhead to Senator Ellis and Representative Naishtat encouraging passage of legislation designating Texas Disability History Month and appropriate curriculum in schools

Participated in the Texas Disability Technology Initiative, Houston Colloquium



Aaron Bangor

Panelist during the 26th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities conference (CSUN). He presented on the topic, "Emerging Technologies From Head to Toe: Smart Phones to Smart Shoes"

Sent e-mail blasts to the TechLunch group about devices allowing the same mobile options for deaf phone users; accessibility of Android phones; and national wheelchair rugby teams playing in Cedar Park

Met with Lex Frieden, PhD, to discuss technology advancement and disability

Daphne Brookins

Attended the "Money Follows the Person & STAR+Plus" forum and presented information about housing

Presented to "Back to School Roundup" about housing rental and utility assistance

Participated at Goodwill of Fort Worth's Wellness Fair

Shared "Fly Date for Youth with Disabilities" at Meacham International Airport in Fort Worth

Spoke to community leaders, service providers for persons who are elderly, who have low incomes, or who have disabilities about poverty

Spoke to First Citizens Police Academy for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Presented to City of Fort Worth department directors, assistant directors, HR Coordinators, department team leaders, managers, & anyone who would like a better understanding of laws and etiquette related to employees and customers with disabilities

Brian Shannon

Gave a presentation on "The Future of Mental Health in Texas" during a conference in Midland

Presented on the topic "You Asked for It – You Got It" at a Texas Center for the Judiciary conference in Horseshoe Bay

Robby Holcomb

Facilitated a Greeting from Governor Rick Perry for presentation during the annual national collegiate wheelchair basketball tournament hosted by UT Arlington's Movin' Mavs. Executive Director Angi English also wrote a letter welcoming athletes for the program book.



Margaret Larsen

Made a presentation to Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities and spoke about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Shared resource "[Disability Studies for Teachers](#)". The lesson plans were sent to 100 schools serving 3,500 students in Texas

Rudy Becerra

Worked with Senator Ellis and Representative Naishtat in filing legislation seeking a State law in honor of [Persons with Disability History and Awareness Day](#)

Hosted students from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired introducing the students to the legislative process and Governor Perry

Kathy Strong

Met with citizens in an effort to re-establish a working local committee to serve persons with disabilities in the Lufkin community

Attended a Nacogdoches Rotary presentation featuring Aliaksei Talafrom, a young man injured at the age of 16 at his family farm in Belarus by a WWII landmine. Both of his legs were lost, his right arm and the lower half of his left arm. Talafrom is in the process of building a village in Belarus for orphaned children and individuals with disabilities. He is close to completion of the main building that will house classrooms and administrative offices. The building is accessible for individuals with mobility impairment. It will house "Café Independence," an Internet café which will be used to counsel and train individuals with disabilities on how to become self sufficient. (Community Awareness)

David Ondich

Coordinated interpreter and CART services and briefed Fort Worth Police on proper etiquette and training techniques to maximize experience for participants of first Citizens Police Academy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

In conjunction with Fort Worth Mayors Committee on Persons with Disabilities, facilitated 6 college scholarships to high school students with disabilities

Established partnership with Texas Workforce and the Fort Worth E-Skills Learning Center to provide training and re-employment of dislocated workers with disabilities

Provided consultation to City of Fort Worth regarding accessibility to Pedestrian Master Plan

Provided consultation through participation on steering committee for the TRIP grant, a transportation service to people with disabilities in Tarrant County through the North Texas Council of Governments

Working with Tarrant County Community College District on Spring 2012 Job and Career Fair for Persons with Disabilities



Annual Disability History Perspectives for 2011

The Texas Disability Perspectives are created at the end of each calendar year to highlight major historical activities related to people with disabilities. The highlighted events or activities are organized into three categories: events or activities that occur in Texas, Nationally and Internationally.

Texas

- In July 2011, Governor Perry signed [SB 1736](#) which will help expedite the entry of veterans and military service members into the workforce by allowing colleges and universities to develop programs that give them credit for experience, education and training obtained during their military service.
- On October 25, 2011, The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities held its first [Lex Frieden Employment Awards](#) in Austin in partnership with the Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities.
- A Texan and Baylor grad, [Allyson Townsend, is ABCs Person of the Week](#). Ally Townsend delivers popular music on YouTube Using American Sign Language to millions of viewers.
- In November, [Zach Anner, an Austinite](#) with cerebral palsy, was selected to host his own travel show on Oprah Winfrey's television network which debuted in December 2011.
- Working with local officials, health care associations, state agencies and Texans with disabilities, Texas established an emergency management system for citizens with and without disabilities who have functional or access needs for preparedness, mitigation and recovery during disasters.
- Texas Division of Emergency Management established a Disability Stakeholder Advisory Council made up of citizens with disabilities and organizations serving people with disabilities to advise TDEM on access and functional needs and to provide insight on community preparedness of the disability community.
- Governor Rick Perry distributed [\\$250,000 from the Texas Disaster Relief Fund](#) through Combined Community Action Inc. to provide seven-day emergency hotel vouchers for individuals and families whose homes have been destroyed in the Bastrop County fire. Combined Community Action administered flexible assistance cards using up to \$350,000 from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to cover essential expenses for these individuals and families.
- Governor Perry recommended creating a [tax incentive for employers who grant their employees two hours a week of paid time off to](#) return to school or study for their GED. Once the employee has received a diploma or GED, the employer is then eligible to receive \$1,500 per student in credit toward sales tax liability.
- The 82nd Legislature passed [HB 3616 designating a "Persons with Disabilities History and Awareness Month"](#) for October of each year to encourage public and private entities, including public schools, to celebrate and develop activities promoting respect for and better treatment of people with disabilities in Texas.



- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 1075](#), which establishes a public alert mechanism for an adult with a diagnosed intellectual disability who goes missing under the existing *Americas Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response* (AMBER) system.
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 1481](#), which requires the use of “people first” language with respect to people with intellectual disabilities and joins thirty-two other states and the District of Columbia in switching from the term “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability.”
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 1335](#), which requires the Texas Education Agency to implement a statewide plan of procedures, including procedures allowing a teacher to request a review of a student's Individualized Education Program.
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 1942](#), which provides for anti-bullying measures in school, including measures against cyber-bullying.
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 2109](#), which supports placement options that allow Texans in need of care to “age in place.”
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB 2903](#), which seeks to increase participation in Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) by making the program available as an alternative to enrollment in a Medicaid managed care plan.
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed SB 14](#), which allows for a citizen to vote without presenting a photo ID if the citizen has documentation from SSI or SSDI of his or her disability.
- [The 82nd Texas Legislature passed SB 866](#), which requires board-certified teachers to be trained to identify and support students with dyslexia.

Nationally

- On January 4, 2011, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit unanimously ruled that a under the Americans with Disabilities Act, [Stephanie Enyart, a blind 2009 UCLA Law School graduate](#), had the right to use screen-reading computer software to take the “multistate” portion of the California bar exam (MBE) as a testing accommodation.
- The [January 2011 Super Bowl “Terrible Towel”](#) of the Pittsburgh Steelers, a golden rag that hails from the 1970s, was produced by a Wisconsin company that employs roughly 50 workers with disabilities who churned out hundreds of thousands of towels in preparation for the big game.
- On June 24, 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a study demonstrating that the nation’s 1.2 million public housing units need an estimated \$25.6 billion for large scale repairs. The study updated a 1998 analysis, and includes estimated costs to address, among other things, overdue repairs and accessibility improvements for residents with disabilities.



- On March 1, 2011, [computer technology manufacturers Tobii and Lenovo](#) publicly introduced the [world's first integrated eye-controlled laptop](#). The fully functional prototype was manufactured by Lenovo, but uses Tobii technology.
- On April 17, 2011, Sprint introduced its new mobile [videophone application, Sprint Mobile VRS, for deaf and hard of hearing individuals](#). The free Android application allows users to access qualified video interpreters who can relay their phone calls.
- On April 14, 2011, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced four initiatives to give states more flexibility to adopt efficient services for Medicaid and Medicare carriers.
- The Alabama state legislature passed a bill on June 2, 2011, that allows all types of service dogs, including autism therapy dogs, into Alabama schools.
- In June of 2011, [cyclists who are deaf and hard of hearing, in conjunction with the organization Miles for Smiles](#), rode across the nation to raise money for children in developing countries who have cleft palates.
- On July 26, 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced its "[Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST](#)" training program for 2011-2012. The Accessibility FIRST Program offers training and technical guidance for architects and builders, helping them to comply with the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act requires certain features of accessible design in all residential buildings with four or more units. Examples of "accessible design" features include accessible routes, wider doors, and kitchens and bathrooms that are wheelchair accessible.
- [Walgreens and Proctor & Gamble, two major Fortune 500 companies, are making efforts to incorporate innovative "Inclusive Employment Models,"](#) which make hiring people with physical and developmental disabilities a corporate initiative.
- On July 26, 2011, the Department of Justice ([DOJ](#)) announced agreements with [Norfolk County](#), Massachusetts; [Daviness County](#), Kentucky; and the city of [Madison](#), Indiana, to improve civic access for individuals with disabilities.
- On August 17, 2011, Delaware Governor Jack Markell signed three bills into law to promote the respect and general inclusion of individuals with disabilities. The new laws mandate the use of people-first language in legislation and establish a Disability History and Awareness month.
- The Department of Education distributed over \$19 million dollars to special education teaching programs nationwide. The goal is to use this money to improve teachers' training in working with students with disabilities. This includes disciplines such as early intervention, speech and language, and transitions.
- On September 10, 2011, social networking site Google+ announced alterations to its "Hangouts" application--a feature for large-group video chatting and sharing--which make the application more "sign language friendly."
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency hosted its second annual "[Getting Real](#)" conference from [September 12-14, 2011](#) in Arlington, VA.



- On February 17, 2011, the Department of Transportation (DOT) imposed a civil penalty of \$2 million upon Delta Air Lines for violating rules protecting air travelers with disabilities. It was the largest penalty ever assessed against an airline by the DOT in a non-safety-related case.
- On August 27, 2011, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., closed permanently after 102 years.
- On September 7, 2011, Kevin Shwedo, Executive Director of South Carolina's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) announced that the DMV would accommodate individuals with disabilities and persons who are elderly with needed transportation to obtain a required photo ID for voting.
- On November 9, 2011, the federal government conducted the [first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#). The test provided the FCC and FEMA a chance to identify improvements that need to be made to build a modernized and fully accessible Emergency Alert System.
- In November, [Oregon became the first state in the country to use iPads to allow people with disabilities to vote in a special primary election of five counties in Oregon](#). There were 89 people with disabilities who marked their ballots on an iPad.
- The Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) developed a free downloadable application (app) for citizens who are blind and visually impaired to assist in identification of the denomination of US currency. [The EyeNote™ is a mobile device app](#) designed for Apple iPhone (3G, 3Gs, 4), and the 4th Generation iPod Touch and iPad2 platforms.

International

- On January 11, 2011, Leila Kaffashzadeh, an expert on the renovation of historical items, proposed that there be museums in Iran devoted to children with visual impairments. At the very least, Kaffashzadeh suggested that sections in existing museums be created to afford visually impaired children an opportunity to examine museum exhibits.
- On February 14, 2011, the Delhi High Court stated that people with hearing impairments can drive if they pass the necessary driving tests. The landmark decision will benefit approximately 50 million hearing-impaired people in the country.
- On February 11, 2011, Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) officials announced that the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) approved a free discount for the use of public transportation by individuals with disabilities, students, and senior citizens.
- On March 1, 2011, computer technology manufacturers Tobii and Lenovo publicly introduced the world's first integrated eye-controlled laptop. The fully functional prototype was manufactured by Lenovo, but uses Tobii technology. The Lenovo computer includes simple yet natural interfaces that should be easy for an average user to use. The Tobii technology allows the viewer to use his or her eyes to point, select, and scroll. The computer also can auto-dim once through eye recognition to increase battery time. (Europe)
- On March 24, 2011, the Singapore government announced its pledge to invest \$3.5 million in the Open Door Fund (ODF) to encourage employers to hire and train people with disabilities.



- In late March 2011, the Joint Association of Persons with Disabilities threatened to boycott elections to take place in April unless Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, signs a bill that would empower people with disabilities.
- Construction on a state of the art rehabilitation clinic for persons with disabilities in Haiti began in May 2011 and is expected to open in early 2012. This facility is intended to help all persons requiring physical therapy or any of the other “disciplines related to rehabilitation medicine, including prosthetics and orthotics.” The facility has been funded with \$1.8 million provided by the American Red Cross, and will be managed by the organization Healing Hands for Haiti. Both the Australian and Norwegian Red Cross organizations are also providing support through the Special Fund for the Disabled. It is being built on a two-acre plot to ensure adequate space and will include training areas so that local clinicians will eventually take over the site. The clinic will make about 200 prostheses per year and plans to handle over 6,000 physical therapy visits per year.
- On June 9, 2011, the World Health Organization and the World Bank jointly released a [“World Report on Disability.”](#) According to the report, about 785 million people worldwide, or about 15% of the world’s population, have a significant physical or mental disability. Five percent are children.
- On June 17th, 2011, India’s Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is drafting a new law in place of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995.
- On June 8th, 2011, the Chinese State Council announced details of a five-year development plan for people with disabilities. The plan will provide the country’s 83 million disabled citizens with twelve years of free education, versus the current standard of nine years.
- On July 28, 2011, a week of intense negotiations came to an end. A wide network of human rights and disability groups, under the direction of the Serbian Mental Disability Rights Initiative, finally succeeded in getting the European Union to back down from funding the reconstruction of six institutions for people with disabilities in Serbia. This important victory against segregation resulted in the redrafting of the \$7.3 million project to instead support the creation of community services in Serbia that will allow children and adults to leave institutions and live in the community.
- On August 3, 2011, Australia’s independent research and advisory board, the Productivity Commission, unveiled a new multi-billion dollar insurance initiative targeting the nation’s people with disabilities. Responding to gaps in the insurance industry, the proposed changes are hailed as the largest social reform since the advent of Medicare. The local government will be responsible for setting up and staffing an insurance agency which will oversee the program. Six billion dollars is to be used to provide high-quality, long-term care for those who have significant disabilities regardless of the origin of the disability.
- On July 26th, 2011, U.S. Ambassador to Lao PDR signed a \$1.4 million agreement to provide improved orthotic services for people with disabilities. The money, from the USAID Patrick Leahy War Victims Fund, will support the development of the Lao Rehabilitation Program through the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE).



- On June 27th, 2011, Quality Tourism Services, Inc., (QTS) launched accessadvisor.ca, a program funded by the Canadian federal and provincial governments to promote, educate, and advance the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island. It advises businesses and communities on accessibility services and provisions. It aims to ensure that accommodations are available regardless of physical limitations. QTS offers operators the resources to categorize and promote their business or location using four accessibility designations -- limited accessibility, fully mobile accessibility, sight accessibility, and hearing accessibility.
- On July 5th, 2011, Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, supported by an overwhelming majority a bill on amendments to some legislative acts on the rights of people with disabilities. The bill will bring national legislation on the rights of people with disabilities in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Laws will be amended so that the terms "disability" and "disabled person" are defined under new wording on the basis of a social rather than a medical model of disability. The bill aims to promote the development of sign language.
- On September 12th, approximately 150 people who are deaf marched to the House of Representatives in the Philippines to push for the passage of two bills mandating the use of sign language in court (HB4631) and on televised news programs (HB 4121).
- On September 13th, Meira Kumar, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament in India, approved a quota for employing people with physical disabilities in the Lok Sabha Secretariat.
- In Australia, new features were implemented on railways that were meant to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The tour of Parramatta station on the International Day of People with Disabilities included station accessibility features, platforms, toilets, safety features, and a broadcast of information pertaining to train changes for people with hearing impairments.

--End of 2011 Annual Report--

Back Cover Graphic: "Wordle of the 2011 Annual Report"

(A Wordle is a graphic image or "word cloud" from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text.)

Cover Photo Credit: "Texas Capitol," Angi English

