

Welcome to the 2012 Utah State Legislative Session

Ok, ok! Yes, I know it's nearly the end of the first week already. But, in my defense, the legislature has been just as slow out of the gate. On the bright side, for the first time in a couple years it looks like the state might have a little extra money to spend. Also, many legislators seem more interested in areas other than health, human, or social services.

Currently, the fiscal analyst is projecting a surplus of around \$280 million. However, \$50 million of that has already been set aside for ongoing programs funded with one-time money for the last several years. Additionally, if the requests for public education and Medicaid enrollment growth were fully funded, it would almost completely wipe out the remaining \$230 million. While that's not likely to happen, it's clear there won't be a lot of money to expand programs or add new ones.

This is why the DLC has decided to focus on ensuring that existing programs and services are adequately funded. Of particular concern is a \$2 million+ gap this year and a \$3 million+ hole next year in DSPD's budget. We are also likely to push for additional money to serve non-Medicaid mental health clients. If there's money left over, we will support the efforts of others to restore adult dental in Medicaid, add to the TBI trust fund, and revive the ICF/ID transition program, among other items.

As for legislation, the DLC is only tracking about 10 bills right now. While the list is almost certain to grow, it is a new experience for us to be in support of about half of the bills available at this stage of the game. In light of this, we will concentrate on working with senators and representatives to make sure that proposals which could potentially impact Utahns with disabilities do so in as positive way as possible.

To kick things off, at 8 AM tomorrow in Room 30 of the House Office Building the Social Services Appropriations Committee will hear a variety of reports as members begin to consider the DSPD budget. To listen to the discussion or review the documents being presented, please visit <http://le.utah.gov>. The legislative site also has contact information for all legislators and agendas for future meetings, as they are made available.

I also want to let you know about two events designed to give you an opportunity to participate in the process and share your story with your senator and/or representative. The first is the Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities reception on February 2nd from 4:30-5:45 PM in the capitol rotunda. To RSVP, call 801-463-1592 or e-mail trouse@usilc.org. The second is the National Alliance on Mental Illness' Chill on the Hill Day on beginning at 9 AM on February 8th in the multipurpose room of the Capitol. To RSVP, call 323-9900 or e-mail amber@namiut.org.

Finally, don't forget to check <http://disabilitylawcenter.org> often for action alerts, recaps of the week's activities, and a preview of what's coming up next. We will also post regular updates to

our bill tracker and interesting agenda items from upcoming meetings. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. As always, thank you for your interest and support.

Andrew Riggle

Public Policy Advocate

Disability Law Center

205 North 400 West

Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

1-800-662-9080 Voice

1-801-363-1437 Fax

1-801-924-3190 Ext. 3209

ariggle@disabilitylawcenter.org

www.disabilitylawcenter.org