



Independent Life

The Center for Independent Living In Central Florida, Inc. April 2008

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The Gavel Falls: 2008 Legislative Session Begins

The 2008 Florida Legislative Session began March 4. There are a number of tough issues that lawmakers face but perhaps the most difficult is the state budget. The poor housing market, declining consumer spending, and rising unemployment means budget cuts are likely.

Florida State Representative Sandra "Sandy" Adams represents District 33 which includes parts of Orange, Seminole, and Volusia Counties. First elected in 2002, Representative Adams has a background in Law Enforcement and is married with three children. She is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Columbia College, and has been a Florida resident since 1964.

Recently, Representative Adams responded to questions posed by CIL regarding social services and other issues being addressed in the 2008 Session. Here are her comments:

Florida's economy is experiencing a period of unprecedented economic downturn. Because of higher property taxes and property insurance premiums, coupled with the rising cost of electricity and gas, living and doing business in Florida is becoming increasingly unaffordable. As the housing market has slowed and wallets are stretched thin, Floridians have less money to spend. And since Florida's budget is mostly derived from sales tax revenues, when Flo-



State Representative Sandra Adams and CIL Director of Advocacy Rogue Gallart.

ridians spend less, the government takes in less money.

Because of this economic slowdown, our state is facing a historic budget shortfall. Late last year, the Legislature met in special session to reduce the 2007-2008 budget by nearly \$1.1 billion. With revenues continuing to fall short of expectations, legislators are being forced to further reduce this fiscal year's budget by an additional \$500 million in order to meet our constitutional requirement of maintaining a balanced budget.

Unfortunately with a shortfall this large, agencies and programs will see funding reductions. With that fact in mind, it would be prudent that social service agencies prepare for budget reductions. The best safeguard agencies can take is

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The BAC: Support and Solutions

There were lively discussions on a variety of employment-related issues at the February Business Advisory Council (BAC) meeting. Some members presented difficult workplace issues and other participants offered specific solutions and support.

The BAC's first meeting of 2008 was Tuesday, February 19 at the La Quinta Inn Orlando/Winter Park on Lee Road in Orlando. More than 45 participants representing a variety of Central Florida businesses and many non-profit agencies serving people with disabilities were there.



Kathryn Garcia is head of EEO and Diversity Programs at Lockheed Martin HR Enterprise Operations and is the Executive Chairperson of the BAC.

She said, "The BAC is a forum that offers a tremendous opportunity to educate Central Florida employers and bring them together with various local government agencies to help address issues related with individuals with disabilities as well as help

identify employment opportunities for them."

William Christian, co-owner of Creations by Dianne, talked about his company's successful experience hiring people with disabilities. Creations by Dianne is a graphic design and specialty printing company.

Janet Gooding, employment specialist for CIL, presented two cases of successfully placing disabled U.S. military veterans in employment.



Dick Everson, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, gave a detailed explanation of the vocational rehabilitation process available to veterans, including determining eligibility, reemployment, self-employment, independent living services, online and in-person assistance.

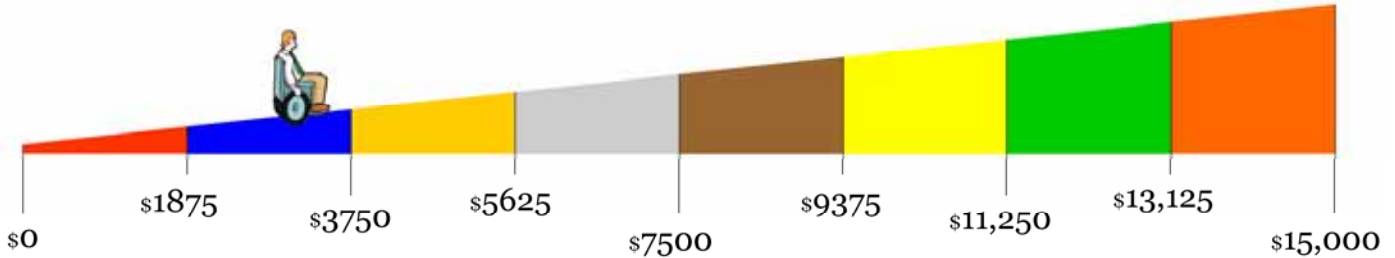
Mr. Everson was joined by Diane Pittman from the VA who talked about the challenges of placing veterans with cognitive disabilities in employment.

BAC conferences and seminars give you the opportunity to learn from ex-

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Rampage! 2008

Dollar Goal: \$15,000



CIL is already planning for this year's wheelchair ramp building event - *Rampage! 2008*. In it's fourth year, Rampage! continues to bring dignity and independence to people with disabilities. The struggle for independence never ends. Often just one or two steps separate many people in Central Florida from working, going to the store or visiting family.

CIL built 6 ramps in 2007 and we want to do more this year. We can succeed, but only with the generous donations of people like you.

If you believe in the mission of CIL, please use the donation form below or use our secure website at: www.cilorlando.org/donate

For more information or to volunteer, please contact CIL at 407-623-1070

I Would Like to Support Rampage 2008

CIL is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people with disabilities to maximize their independence.

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Mr. and Mrs. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Email Address _____

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 _____

I enclose my check made payable to the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida.

Please charge my VISA MasterCard

Card Number _____ Exp Date _____ Signature _____

Please send your gift to:

Center for Independent Living
720 N. Denning Drive
Winter Park, Florida 32789

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF CIL

Grants and Donations

CIL acknowledges the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation for its support of accessibility modifications. The company granted CIL \$1500 in January to perform home and safety modifications such as wheelchair ramps, shower grab bars, widening of doorways, and flashing smoke detectors for the deaf to name a few.

CIL also thanks CSX Transportation for its generous donation of \$3500 to support our wheelchair ramp building event Rampage! 2008.

Voting Rights for People with Disabilities

The past year has seen one of the most hotly contested presidential races in years. Interest in the race and the candidates is high, which also brings the issue of voting rights for people with disabilities into the spotlight. In years past, full access to both polling places and voting machines have been a challenge to people with disabilities.

The Help America Vote Act, passed in the wake of the botched 2000 election, brought touch screen voting machines to many counties in Florida and with them improved access for some people with disabilities. Since then, some have demanded the replacement or retrofitting of touch screen machines with machines that leave a paper trail so recounts can be conducted. This could mean decreased access for Florida voters with disabilities. Florida legislators voted last year to replace touch screen voting machines in time for this year's general election.

"This legislation will preserve the integrity of Florida's elections and protect every Floridian's right to have his or her vote counted", Governor Charlie Crist said.

In December 2007 and January 2008 CIL conducted disability sensitivity training to over 2,000 poll workers in Orange and Seminole counties.

Florida statute requires poll workers to receive disability sensitivity training. The hour-long training sessions have two parts: a PowerPoint presentation and a hands-on demonstration of typical obstacles faced by people with disabilities in a polling place.

Some poll workers said they enjoyed the information presented, learned new things and asked about the other services offered by CIL. The trainings are provided on a contract basis. If the contract is renewed, CIL will be offering trainings again this fall.

Some proposed solutions to access problems include a wider variety of transportation, increased use of absentee ballots, and early voting for people with disabilities. People with disabilities will still have access to touch screen voting systems until 2012 when they are scheduled to be phased out.

To learn more about Disability Sensitivity Training please contact us at 407-623-1070.

Job Club Explores Employment Variety

Five CIL employment consumers recently toured the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport and learned about the wide variety of positions available at the hotel. The three hour tour included lunch and a look at everything from the front desk to behind the scenes positions.



The hotel's Employee Relations Coordinator, Louann Perez conducted the tour and showed consumers the array of different departments and positions. Starting with the lobby, she explained the front desk duties and the importance of the hotel Concierge. The tour moved on to the pool and recreation facilities. She went into detail regarding the positions available at the hotel's two restaurants.

The tour also included a good look at the guest rooms, the laundry, the 42,000 square feet of meeting space, and security.

During lunch the Employment Manager, Kristy Calderon, gave a presentation on the details of the positions and benefits available at the 445 room hotel. Unlike some hotels, Hyatt employees are given three uniforms which are cleaned by the hotel's laundry service. Employees receive one free meal a day and get free parking. At the airport, free parking is a real perk.

Other benefits for full-time associates include vacation and paid time off; medical, dental, and vision insurance, discounted/complementary hotel nights, discounted Lynx passes and movie tickets.

Ms. Calderon explained that Hyatt has a policy of promoting from within and that the hotel's General Manager started out as a Concierge.

Ms Calderon looks at every job application. She says CIL's employment department helps makes her job easier by pre-screening applicants. If a candidate is referred to the Hyatt from CIL, she will simply give the candidate a call.

The CIL consumers who toured the hotel said they were impressed by the variety of positions available and the generous benefits.

Other special employment related events are scheduled for the future as part of CIL's commitment to provide employment services for people with disabilities.

For more information on CIL's Employment Services call 407-623-1070.



BAC: Support and Solutions

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perts in the field as well as interact with others facing the same issues. You have the opportunity to focus on disability issues where the emphasis is on the exchange of practical information.

Rogue Gallart of the Center for Independent Living said, "Today's meeting is a great example of how the Business Advisory Council is a win-win for all participants. I heard a number of people bring up problems they've faced and other members, who have faced the same or similar problems, offer up good, tangible solutions."

The BAC Executive Committee consists of Executive Chairperson, Kathryn Garcia of Lockheed Martin; Executive Co-Chairpersons, Kristy Calderon, Louann Perez, both of the Hyatt Regency Orlando Airport and Nichole Arguello, MBA of All Medical Personnel; and Business Liaison, Rogue Gallart of the Center for Independent Living.

The BAC is open to all area businesses and membership is free. Accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Breakfast for the February BAC meeting was catered by Einstein Bros. Bagels.



"The BAC is an awesome opportunity for local equal opportunity employers to educate themselves on the disabled workforce and to connect with those with disabilities."

Nichole Arguello, Branch Director, All Medical Personnel

"The BAC is not only a great networking opportunity for Central Florida businesses and organizations but it also provides a forum to educate each other on employing individuals with disabilities."

Kristy Calderon, Employment Manager, Hyatt Regency Orlando Airport



"The Business Advisory Council offers Central Florida companies and organizations the opportunity to network and better serve our community; we recognize obstacles that those with disabilities may face, and collaborate with both employers and those seeking employment on how to overcome them."

Louann Perez, Human Resources - Associate Relations Coordinator, Hyatt Regency Orlando Int'l Airport

Lakeland Office in Action

ALPI

CIL is partnering with Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. (ALPI) to provide emergency assistance and case management services to qualified low-income residents with disabilities. CIL will provide office space and will schedule appointments for consumers to be seen by ALPI staff.

Emergency Assistance is a one-time payment to alleviate a crisis that may adversely impact a consumer and/or his family. Services may include home energy payments, rental/mortgage assistance, water bill assistance and more.

Case Management services are designed to assist the consumer and his or her family in their movement toward self-sufficiency. Comprehensive Case Management services may include the purchase of wheelchairs, walkers, canes, medicine, legal assistance and much more.

New Employment Specialist

The Lakeland office will be getting a new part-time employment specialist. She'll assess and prepare consumers for employment and forge relationships with possible employers. She'll provide training in resume writing, job search techniques, interview skills, and job retention. She'll also schedule mock interviews with human resources administrators; work with consumers to identify employers and much more.

Wheelchair Ramp Building

With funding from Darden Restaurants Foundation, the Lakeland office helped coordinate the building of two wheelchair ramps in January. Both wooden ramps were about 26 feet long and were built for residents of Lake Wales.

The volunteer groups who generously donated their time and effort to build the ramps were: The Men's Ministry Group of the First Baptist Church of Lake Wales and the Talbot Aftercare Group.



Ramp Partnership

The Lakeland office is partnering with the non-profit Centro Campesino and the DeSoto Housing Authority to build a wheelchair ramp for a consumer in Arcadia

CIL is contributing \$500 towards the purchase of the materials and the DeSoto Housing authority is supplying the remaining funding.

Mr. Steve Menghini, Centro Campesino Director, is partnering with CIL to help coordinate the building process by securing architectural plans, getting the proper permitting, and applying for funding.

The goal is to complete the ramp by the end of March.

For more information on the services provided by our Lakeland offices please call 407-623-1070 or email info@cilorlando.org.

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The Gavel Falls...

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the process of weighing available resources and competing needs against each other to make the best possible use of resources during a time of declining revenues.

In July 2007, Governor Crist signed an executive order that formed the Governor's Commission on Disabilities. The members of the commission are appointed by the Governor and represent state agencies and major disabilities organizations as well as individuals from the disability community. The commission gathers stakeholder input and makes recommendations for future legislation.

The Legislature strongly supports programs for persons with disabilities and legislation that specifies the rights of Floridians with disabilities. Recent evidence of initiatives to support people with disabilities can be seen by the increase in funding for programs for persons with developmental disabilities.

The Legislature has also showed strong support for veterans. To compliment the services the Federal government provides for veterans, Florida also offers a number of services. One service provided by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is housing. Florida has one assisted living facility that serves 150 veterans and five veterans' nursing homes serving 600 veterans.

I appreciate the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida contacting me regarding important issues being addressed in the 2008 Session. Please be assured that even in the midst of a historic budget shortfall, the Legislature is committed to funding disability and veteran services.

The legislative session is scheduled to run through May 2. You can reach Representative Adams through her district office: 2074 Winter Springs Boulevard, Oviedo, FL 32765-9347, Phone: (407) 977-4020.