

# LOUISIANA CITIZENS FOR ACTION NOW

*Advocating for Louisiana Citizens with Developmental Disabilities*

## Legislative Session Wrap Up July 6, 2009

- 2009 Legislative Session Wrap Up
- What Can You Do?
- What Happened in the Budget (HB 1)?
- What Happened with Other Legislation?
- Any Questions?

If there are any questions about the information in this email contact LaCAN's Coordinator by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below.

## 2009 Legislative Session Wrap Up

This year's legislative session was very difficult and left people with disabilities and their families disappointed and uncertain about the future. Although there were few successes for people with disabilities in the 2009 session, **it is extremely important for us to channel our frustrations into constructive actions so we can build our advocacy strength for the future.**

This email includes a brief summary of the things LaCAN focused on during the session and some suggested actions.

## What Can You Do?

Many have expressed feelings of disappointment and frustration about what happened, or did not happen, during the legislative session. In addition, many are concerned of how these decisions may impact their services. It is hoped that LaCAN members will **use this opportunity to educate our policy makers.** Here are some suggestions:

1. If you, or your child, are on the waiver waiting list, let your state legislators and Governor Jindal know that you are still waiting, how long you have been waiting, and that you/your child need services.
2. If you or your child's services are adversely affected by the cuts, or you lose needed services in the coming months, let your state legislators and Governor Jindal know.
3. Building personal relationships with your legislators is vital to our future success. Visit your legislators face-to-face in their district office or invite them to visit you in your home to share your personal story.
4. Write to Governor Jindal to let him know your feelings and concerns.

The goal is to have legislators and the Governor better able to understand the issues and realize that we want to be remembered when they make decisions in the future. **We want to inform and educate our policy makers on the impact their decisions make on us in a respectful and constructive manner.** It is important that we strengthen our relationships with them so they remain open to hearing us now and in the future.

### **What Happened in the Budget (HB 1)?**

~~~~~

LaCAN members are, of course, very disappointed that **2,000 additional NOW slots for those on the waiting list were NOT included in HB 1** especially since the NOW Trust Fund had money to fund these needed slots. Also of concern are the CUTS to community supports and services. While the specific amounts and impacts of the cuts have not yet been determined by DHH, an initial review appears to indicate that there will be:

- CUTS to waiver rates; CUTS to support coordination (case management) rates; CUTS to community regional OCDD offices, districts, and authorities; CUTS to EPSDT and Long Term Personal Care Services rates.
- CUTS were also sustained by the Community Living Ombudsman Program that helps ensure quality in community homes, the Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), and the Best Buddies program, which was eliminated from the state budget.

Additionally, **no developmental centers were closed and HB 1 includes an increase in their overall budget.** This and the above cuts demonstrate that both Governor Jindal and legislators have a preference for costly institutional services that isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities over cost effective individualized supports that provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live, work and play in their own homes and communities. This is impossible to understand!

### **What Happened with Other Legislation?**

~~~~~

On the positive side:

- **HB 788 was WITHDRAWN.** This bill would have established an individual "cap" on waiver services that would have resulted in individuals with high needs being ineligible for waiver services.
- **HB 832 was DEFERRED** in the Senate Natural Resources Committee. This bill would have allowed the property of the closed Metropolitan Developmental Center to be sold below appraised value. Since the money from sale of such state property would go to home and community-based services, it was important this precedent not be created.

- **SB 267 PASSED.** The initial language of this bill that was of concern that called for the abolishment of special funds (for example the NOW Trust Fund) was removed from the bill.
- **SCR 116 PASSED.** Originally this resolution authorized and directed that savings from cost effective practices in the NOW program be kept in that program and used for **new slots for people on the waiting list.** However, **it was amended on the House floor to say the savings could also be used to "sustain current slots."**

On the negative side:

- **SCR 42 FAILED** to be heard in the House, after passing in the Senate and House Health and Welfare Committee. This resolution called for the development and implementation of a plan to reorganize the state's developmental centers and among other things said any cost savings would be used for waivers. It also called for Resource Allocation to be implemented in the state's developmental centers.

### **Any Questions?**

~~~~~  
If there are any questions about the information in this email contact LaCAN's Coordinator by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below.

### **Contact Information**

~~~~~  
Email: [list@lacanadvocates.org](mailto:list@lacanadvocates.org)  
Phone: 1-800-450-8108  
Web: <http://www.lacanadvocates.org>  
~~~~~