

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

80th Legislature Report (2007)

What a Session! CTD's Work on Behalf of Texans with Disabilities

This year the State had a significant budget surplus; it seemed a perfect time to address funding issues for Texans with disabilities. CTD worked tirelessly, dawn to dawn (really!) throughout 140 days of the 80th session to help ensure that Texans with disabilities were represented. CTD testified in committee hearings, visited legislative offices, supplied/reviewed bill language, and wrote and distributed position papers. CTD also sponsored the Road to Freedom ADA bus tour, combining the event with a press conference on the Capitol steps. Additionally, CTD collaboratively held two rallies on the steps of the Capitol.

CTD implemented Raise Your Voice! (www.cotwd.org), a web-based tool, via which many CTD members participated in the democratic process, contacting their legislators on important issues. CTD held our annual statewide convention blocks from the Capitol in April and attendees headed over; when a constituent takes the effort to visit their Legislator in their Capitol offices, it has an enormous impact! So, many thanks to you, CTD members and supporters!

Sometimes less traditional means of advocacy puts disability issues on the radar: CTD organized the *Legless Lizard Tour de Tejas*, a 25-day public awareness event to draw attention to pressing legislative issues. CTD member and polio survivor Mikail Davenport hand-cycled 950 miles from El Paso to Beaumont, attracting a national documentary film crew, national, state and local media all along the route.

CTD is deeply appreciative AARP for their strong effort on reducing the waiting list for community services, utility and voter ID issues. Along with our partners in broad-based disability advocacy (ADAPT, Advocacy Inc. and the Texas Center for Disability Studies) CTD efforts included:

On voting -we won the battle! Numerous bills were filed to water down or eliminate accessible voting rights gained under the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA). You know well the value of casting a private ballot, accessible polling places and accessible voting machines. CTD worked closely with the election committees in both chambers, expressing the strong will of Texans with disabilities to never return to the days of disenfranchisement. And an influx of "voter ID" became a high profile challenge; if passed it would have harmed the voting participation of people with disabilities, elders and minorities.

CTD was actively involved in over 21 disability bills, while two bills were filed at CTD's request. HB2216 passed, ensuring that structurally modified vehicles remain available in Texas. However, the ADA bill did not pass. CTD advanced it significantly this session, passing it through the House Civil Practices committee and raising awareness to the State's offensive practice of claiming immunity for its acts of disability discrimination. CTD was also among the primary advocates for successful bills on **consumer directed services, workers comp extended coverage, judicial review of Medicaid decisions, property tax cuts for homeowners with.** HB 308 (AKA: "blind hunters bill") legalized the use of laser sighting devices for hunters with blindness. CTD supported this as it a true Texan example of reasonable accommodation and inclusion into all activities!

BILL & SPONSORS	CTD'S ROLE/ PARTNERS	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
State Budget Issues		
<p>HB1 (budget bill) Funding for community services/ Reduce community services waiting list by 10%</p>	<p>CTD testimonies, letter writing, direct visits with legislative offices, organizer of Capitol Day of advocacy, statewide media campaign</p> <p>Partners: all disability advocacy organizations, AARP</p>	<p>\$267 Million in state funds and federal match to reduce the community services wait list</p>
<p>HB1 (budget bill) Increase wages for community care attendants</p>	<p>CTD testimonies, letter writing, direct visits with legislative offices, organizer of Capitol Day of advocacy, statewide media campaign</p> <p>Partners: ADAPT, PACT</p>	<p>Contingencies included in budget tied to increase in federal minimum wage rate.</p>
<p>HB1 (budget bill) Systems Benefit Fund</p>	<p>CTD lead and sole disability advocate/testimony/letter writing, direct visits with legislative offices</p> <p>Partners: AARP</p>	<p>After being zeroed out in 2005, reinstated programs that assist low income Texans who are having trouble paying their utility bills</p>
<p>HB1 (budget bill) End wait lists for Comprehensive Rehab Services</p>	<p>CTD and Brain Injury Assn. of TX as lead advocates</p>	<p>\$6.3 M in new funding to end the waiting list for CRS (intensive early rehab of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries)</p>
<p>HB1 (budget bill) Centers for Independent Living</p>	<p>CTD testimonies, fiscal analysis, office visits, Capitol Day of Advocacy</p> <p>Partners: TACIL, SILC</p>	<p>\$1M to establish 2 new centers for independent living</p>
Voting Legislation		
<p>HB 218 (Brown/Fraser), HB 1726 (Harper-Brown)</p>	<p>CTD, Advocacy Inc., AARP, ADAPT as lead advocates <u>in opposition</u></p> <p>Testimony/direct visits with legislative offices</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>Kept all onerous “voter ID” bills from passing. These laws would have effectively suppressed voting by the elderly and people with disabilities.</p>
<p>HB 690 (Brown), HB 600 (Smith Wayne), HB 1031 (Chisum), HB 65 (Leibowitz), HB 101 (Riddle), HB 731 (Kolkhorst)</p>	<p>CTD, and Advocacy Inc., as lead advocates <u>in opposition</u></p> <p>Testimony/direct visits with legislative offices</p> <p>Partners: ADAPT</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>Killed the worst of the bills designed to change Texas Election Code to exempt political subdivisions from having accessible voting machines and meet the same accessibility requirements used in federal elections</p>

<p>HB 626 (Phil King)</p>	<p>CTD and Advocacy Inc., as lead advocates in <u>opposition</u></p>	<p>NOT PASSED Would have created new obstacles in the voter registration process which could in turn disenfranchise many voters & practically eliminate voter registration drives.</p>
<p>HB 556 (Hildebrand)</p>	<p>CTD, Advocacy Inc. lead advocates in <u>support</u> /work with senate author on bill text, diluting exclusionary language</p>	<p>PASSED Provides protections for people with disabilities: requires accessible voting available on demand, public notification of availability of accessible voting machines in very small political subdivisions, maintaining at least one accessible machine in small political subdivisions and maintaining current accessibility standards for medium and large political subdivisions.</p>
<p>** Diverse Disability Legislation**</p>		
<p>HB 2216 (Turner/Shapiro) Modified Vehicles</p>	<p>CTD initiated bill Partners: Lone Star Adaptive Auto Dealers Association, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Akin Gump</p>	<p>PASSED Ensured that new vehicles structurally modified for people with disabilities will be available.</p>
<p>HB1299/SB447 (Strama/Hinojosa) ADA bill</p>	<p>CTD initiated bill testimonies, letter writing, direct visits with legislative offices, organizer of Capitol Day of advocacy, statewide media campaign</p>	<p>NOT PASSED This bill would waive the state’s sovereign immunity to ADA complaints, ending Texas’ offensive practice of claiming immunity for its acts of disability discrimination. Passed in House Civil Practices committee, blocked in Senate State Affairs committee</p>
<p>HB5 (Berman, Naishtat/Deuell) Tax cuts</p>	<p>CTD and ADAPT lead disability organizations in support Partners: AARP, TX Silver Haired Legislature</p>	<p>PASSED Extends property tax cuts to homeowners with disabilities and older homeowners.</p>
<p>HCR 35 (Rodriguez/Ellis) Eliminate Medicare waiting period</p>	<p>CTD, TX Center for Disability Studies, UCP TX, Center for Public Policy Priorities, ADAPT, DD Council, American Heart Association All in support</p>	<p>PASSED Urging the United States Congress to enact legislation to eliminate the 24-month Medicare waiting period for participants in Social Security Disability Insurance.</p>
<p>SB 439, other bills (Deuell/Hughes/Rodriguez) Don’t Pull the Plug</p>	<p>CTD in strong support, testimony, office visits, committee advocacy Partners: TX Center for Disability Studies, ADAPT, TX Right to Life</p>	<p>NOT PASSED Advanced directives legislation. CTD advocated for treatment pending transfer—“don’t pull the plug”, protection for people with disabilities.</p>

<p>SB 409 (Janek/Gattis) Epilepsy medications</p>	<p>CTD offered testimony in support Partner: Epilepsy Foundation of South & Central Texas, Santos Alliances</p>	<p>NOT PASSED Relating to restrictions on the interchange of anti-epileptic drugs and drugs used to treat or prevent seizures. This bill would have assured that persons with epilepsy would not have their medications changed for any reason unless specified by their Doctor.</p>
<p>HB 75 (Naishtat/Wentworth) State court judicial review</p>	<p>CTD in strong support, testimony Partners: Texas Legal Services Center, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Advocacy Inc.</p>	<p>PASSED Allows state court judicial review of decisions about Medicaid and other public assistance benefits.</p>
<p>SB 744 (Seliger/Rose) Protection from abuse, neglect</p>	<p>CTD offered testimony, committee advocacy, in support Partners: Advocacy Inc.</p>	<p>PASSED Prohibiting retaliation for reports of possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation of certain persons receiving home and community-based services.</p>
<p>SB458 (Watson/Giddings) Workers comp coverage</p>	<p>CTD in strong support, worked with sponsor, testimony Partner: Lone Star Amputee Rights</p>	<p>PASSED Requires workers comp to cover prosthetics and orthotics damaged on the job.</p>
<p>SB 1766 (Watson/Naishtat) Consumer Directed Services</p>	<p>CTD in strong support, committee advocacy Partners: ADAPT, Ovations Health</p>	<p>PASSED Continues the Consumer Directed Services Workgroup and extends CDS to more consumers</p>
<p>SB 1866 (Zaffirini/Naishtat) Remove HCS cost caps</p>	<p>CTD in support, testimony Partner: TX Center for Disability Studies, ARC of TX</p>	<p>PASSED as amendment to SB 10 Removes a cost cap on the Home and Community Services waiver, will allow people with high needs to more easily exit institutions</p>
<p>HB 416 (Strama/Watson) Restroom Access</p>	<p>CTD in support, working with sponsors Partner: Krohn's & Colitis Foundation</p>	<p>PASSED provides for restroom access for persons with certain medical conditions; for example: employee restrooms in commercial facilities</p>
<p>HB 308 (Kuempel) Accommodations for certain hunters with disabilities</p>	<p>CTD offered testimonies & press in support Partners: Paralyzed Veterans of America, Texas State Rifle Association</p>	<p>PASSED A reasonable accommodation bill. Legalized the use of laser sighting devices by hunters who are legally blind. This bill will allow hunters who are blind to hunt safer along side a sighted hunter.</p>
<p>HB 1168 (Menendez, Shapleigh) Standards for small group homes</p>	<p>CTD in support, testimony</p>	<p>PASSED Extends state licensing and regulation to unregulated group homes; provides standards to protect residents</p>
<p>HB 1781 (Harless/Ellis) Accessible Parking</p>	<p>CTD in support Partners: Travis County Constable, Advocacy Inc.</p>	<p>PASSED Provides for easier ID by police of proper user of parking placards for people who are disabled.</p>

<p>HB 1230 (Rodriguez/Zaffirini)</p> <p>Community living options</p>	<p>CTD in support, testimony</p> <p>Partners: TX Center for Disability Studies, TX Advocates</p>	<p>PASSED</p> <p>Increases transition services for young people with disabilities exiting school</p>
<p>HB 1738 (Lucio III, Deuell)</p> <p>Medicaid Buy-In for families with kids with disabilities</p>	<p>CTD key support, committee advocacy</p> <p>Partner: TX Center for Disability Studies</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>Would remove the disincentive to work for families with kids needing Medicaid services and require families to share in costs.</p>
<p>SB 62/HB939 (Zaffirini/Naishtat)</p> <p>Individual development accounts</p>	<p>CTD in support, testimony</p> <p>Partners: CPPP, Foundation Communities, TX Mental Health Consumers</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>Would have created subsidized savings accounts for low income households.</p>
<p>SB 568 (Ellis, Smithee)</p> <p>Mental health parity</p>	<p>CTD in support, testimony</p> <p>Partners: Mental Health America, NAMI, TX Mental Health Consumers</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>Would have required equal insurance coverage for mental illnesses as for physical illnesses.</p>
<p>HB 407 (Chisum/Watson)</p> <p>Home delivered meals</p>	<p>CTD participated on implementation workgroup</p>	<p>PASSED</p> <p>CTD advocated that extra funding could provide home delivered meals to people with disabilities under 60, a population not allowed under federally-funded home delivered meals.</p>
<p>SB 1620 (Van De Putte)</p> <p>Confidentiality of Rx info</p>	<p>CTD testimony</p> <p>Partner: Santos Alliances</p>	<p>NOT PASSED</p> <p>CTD initially opposed a provision in this bill that would restrict prescription information to consumers; once the provision was removed, CTD supported a study on this issue.</p>