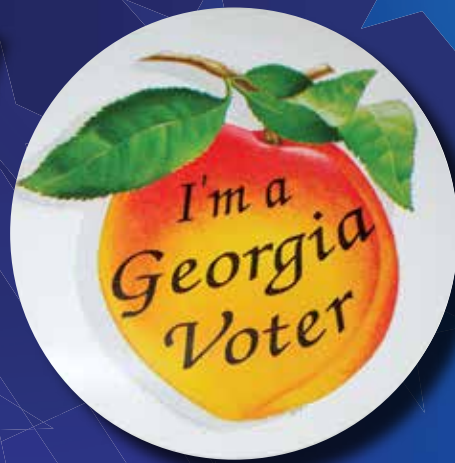


**Making a  
Difference**

GCDD's Guide  
to the 2018  
Midterm Elections

**THE DISABILITY  
VOTE  
COUNTS!**



Fall  
2018

[gcdd.org](http://gcdd.org)

**GCDD**  
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Transforming  
Employment  
for People with  
Disabilities

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is driven by its Five Year Plan (2017-2021) goals of education; employment; self-advocacy; Real Communities; and formal and informal supports. The Council, charged with creating systems change for individuals with developmental disabilities and family members, will work through various advocacy and capacity building activities to build a more interdependent, self-sufficient, and integrated and included disability community across Georgia.

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Eric E. Jacobson, Executive Director, [eric.jacobson@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:eric.jacobson@gcdd.ga.gov)  
2 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 26-246, Atlanta, GA 30303-3142  
Voice 404.657.2126, Fax 404.657.2132, Toll Free 1.888.275.4233  
TDD 404.657.2133, [info@gcdd.org](mailto:info@gcdd.org), [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org)

O'Neill Communications, Design & Layout  
Devika Rao, [devika@oneillcommunications.com](mailto:devika@oneillcommunications.com)

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On the Cover: GCDD's focus is on the importance of people with disabilities exercising their right to vote in the midterm elections. The Disability Vote Counts!



## YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN IF YOU DON'T VOTE!

I remember when I turned 18 and voted for the very first time; it was the 1980 presidential election. Prior to 1980, my mother had already instilled in me the pride and civic responsibility that came with living in this great country.

She reminded me that part of that responsibility was to participate in the electoral process. And that meant voting. "You can't complain if you don't vote!" was her mantra.

By the time you read this, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) will have hosted our Candidate Forum on Disability Issues, where key candidates for Insurance Commissioner, School Superintendent and Secretary of State shared where they stand on issues important to people with disabilities. A recap will be coming shortly on our website and in our quarterly newsletter. But, it's up to you to go to the voting booth on Tuesday, November 6.

For years, we have spoken about the disability community comprising the largest minority voting bloc in the country. This means that we can have an influence on elections if we participate. I have heard many pundits call this the most important election ever. Just remember that we are electing state and local people who will make policies that will impact your lives. And as my mother insisted, **YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN IF YOU DON'T VOTE.**

One of the issues we need to be discussing with those running for office is employment. While we have made some progress, there are still too many Georgians with disabilities who want to go to work but don't have the supports. Just like with voting, employment gives an individual the opportunity to participate in American civic life by becoming a taxpayer. But how will Georgia use its resources to help people with disabilities participate in this part of society? We hear how the economy is growing and doing well, but this growth has not yet reached everyone, especially people with disabilities.

In this edition of *Making a Difference*, we will talk about what's happening to increase employment for people with disabilities in Georgia and the resources they can access. In fact, in a recent hearing of the Joint Appropriations Committee for Health and Human Services, we emphasized that employment is the outcome people with disabilities most often desire. This is why programs like inclusive post-secondary education or Project SEARCH are essential. Transition



Eric E. Jacobson

from high school signals the beginning of life as an adult, and employment is a key part of that.

Bottom line: We can make a difference by engaging in our civic responsibility to participate in the electoral process and by making sure people have a job. GCDD will continue to work on both of these issues.

**FOR YEARS, WE HAVE SPOKEN  
ABOUT THE DISABILITY  
COMMUNITY COMPRISING THE  
LARGEST MINORITY VOTING  
BLOC IN THE COUNTRY.** ”

[Check out GCDD's website](#) and [join our advocacy network](#) so that you can stay informed. We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and we want to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts and comments by writing to Managing Editor, Hillary Hibben, at [hillary.hibben@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:hillary.hibben@gcdd.ga.gov).

*Eric E. Jacobson*

Eric E. Jacobson  
Executive Director, GCDD



## Disability Employment Initiative Gets People into Workforce

The US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) recognized Georgia's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) nationally for demonstrating best practices towards providing services and opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.

Launched in 2015, DEI is funded by a US Department of Labor (DOL) grant designed to "promote physical and programmatic access to job seekers with disabilities into Georgia's Workforce System."

Georgia's DEI is under the Technical College System of Georgia's Office of Workforce Development office. It is the administrator of WorkSource Georgia, the state's federally-funded employment and training system, working to connect talent with opportunity. At a local level, the Office of Workforce Development provides Workforce Innovation of Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and technical assistance to the 19 Local Workforce Development Areas across the State. WIOA funds are allotted to dislocated workers, low-income adults and youth and administered specifically through services geared toward helping disadvantaged citizens obtain meaningful employment.

It was nationally recognized for funding a full-time Certified Rehabilitation Counselor whose entire caseload consists of shared co-enrolled WIOA title I and WIOA title IV customers to maximize positive outcomes for both job seekers with disabilities and workforce programs.

"Through this model, all these agencies are working together to employ people with disabilities in jobs that provide gainful wages and are in integrated settings," said Rosanny Rios, Disability Employment Initiative Lead, Technical College System of Georgia's Office of Workforce Development.

The grant utilizes six strategies to promote this access: Integrated Resource Teams, Social Security Administration Ticket to Work Program (EN), Customized Employment, Customized Training, Career Pathways and Partnership & Collaboration.

Georgia's DEI works with WorkSource Northeast Georgia and WorkSource Central Savannah River Area to bolster employment opportunities for Georgians with disabilities that reside in those regions. Specifically, DEI is working in Augusta, Athens and Atlanta.

Those areas were strategically chosen to expand the impact of this program across the State, with plans to continue growing to new counties and areas.

Additionally, DEI is focusing on Ticket to Work, a resource provided to all individuals who receive Social Security Income

(SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), many of whom are people with disabilities.

Currently, 14 individuals have already utilized Ticket to Work, and approximately 100 people are participating in the DEI program.



**Agencies are working together to employ people with disabilities in jobs that provide gainful wages and are in integrated settings.**

"This is a win-win for providers and people with disabilities," added Rios. "Many people do not know that this program exists, and through DEI, we want to bring more attention to it so people can utilize these resources and get into the workforce."

Currently, Rios is working to expand the program and make it more sustainable across the State. Her main goal is to develop a structure to increase these services to maximize positive outcomes for both job seekers with disabilities and workforce programs.

[Learn more about the DEI program at the Technical College System of Georgia.](#)

## Real Communities Retreat Focuses on Shifts in Community

Approximately 25 people gathered at Amicalola State Falls Park from Sept. 26-28 to learn, gather and share about their work in the communities at the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' Real Communities Retreat.

The retreat brought together Real Communities partners from Clarkston, Dahlonega, Savannah and Atlanta. And, its goal was to allow the partners to share personal and professional outcomes of the work being done in these local areas.

Trelani Michelle, whose career has focused on cultural organization and community advocacy, led the retreat for two days. "The goal of the two-day workshop was to understand how the community has shifted through the work of the Real Communities partners," shared Michelle.

The packed agenda focused on topics like inclusion, evolution of the community and accessibility.

More so, Michelle saw a common theme emerge from the participants as they spoke about their projects and work in the community. "The work has opened up compassion, which shifts a community to be more willing to change and become more inclusive."

Kate, an attendee, has learned the impact of grassroots level involvement, but also knows how much work needs to be done through advocacy.

"[The work in my community] taught me a shift from not only doing what's guaranteed to be worthwhile, to engaging in taking risks because that's the rhythm of our work. We could work really hard and spend lots of



Participants of Connectability's Meet Your Neighbor program

resources and things still cannot change. So, we have to change our policy at the state level."

**THE WORK HAS OPENED UP COMPASSION, WHICH SHIFTS A COMMUNITY TO BE MORE WILLING TO CHANGE AND BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE.**



Launched statewide in 2010, Real Communities Partnerships work with local groups to build more than just communities. Through a thoughtful, action-learning approach that equips community members at the local, grassroots level, they work together toward common goals to improve their community using person-centered supports, community-centered connections and persistent and reflective learning. Purposefully involving people with and without developmental disabilities in collaborative projects is pivotal to the framework of Real Communities.

[Learn more about GCDD's Real Communities Partnerships.](#)



### Real Communities Current Partnerships

- Al Tamyoz Community Building Group – Clarkston, GA
- Centenary United Methodist Church (Macon Roving Listeners) – Macon, GA
- Connectability Meet Your Neighbor – Dahlonega, GA
- Forsyth Farmers' Market – Savannah, GA
- Hillside Neighborhood – LaGrange, GA
- Peacebuilders Camp at Koinonia Farms – Americus, GA

# THE DISABILITY VOTE COUNTS! – A Guide to Voting

by Hanna Rosenfeld, GCDD Planning & Policy Development Specialist



Voting is one of our most important rights and civic duties as citizens living in a democracy. When you participate in the election process, you help pave the path toward progress for people with disabilities. In Georgia, more than one million people have disabilities and approximately 652,000 are of voting age.

The following is a guide on voting for people with disabilities and everything you need to know about the election on November 6, 2018.

## DISABILITY GUIDE TO VOTING . . .

### Eligibility

To participate in the voting process in Georgia, you must be a citizen of the United States; a legal resident of Georgia and of the county in which you plan to vote; and 18 years of age by Election Day. Check your status through the Secretary of State’s website or contact your county voter registration office to see if you are registered to vote.

### Assistance

If a voter with a disability is unable to sign his or her name; to see or mark the answers on the ballot; use the voting equipment; or cannot enter the voting booth without support, they may bring someone to help them.

A voter with a disability can receive support from any individual EXCEPT his or her employer, representative of his or her employer or a representative of his or her union, nor a poll worker or poll watcher, who is a resident of the precinct where the voter needing support is trying to vote.

Voters with disabilities can receive assistance from any other individuals including a mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, friend or child. Each individual assisting the voter with a disability must record his or her name on the elector’s voter certificate.

A voter with a disability is **not required** to have someone assist them at the polls – it is their choice.

Additionally, poll officers and workers are provided training regarding the use of voting equipment, procedures and all aspects of state and federal laws applicable to conducting elections.

### Assistive Technology

For voters with disabilities who require accommodation in the form of assistive technology, there are accessible touch screen voting equipment options provided at the

polls that allow for assistance, but give more privacy and independence for voters to select their choices. These options include:

- An audio ballot for those with visual impairment or who are blind, equipped with headphones and a number keypad similar to an automated phone service.
- A magnifying feature that is available on every touch screen voting unit in Georgia, which allows voters to enlarge the print on the ballot.
- Touch screen voting units that allow a voter to vote while sitting in a chair or wheelchair.

### Reading the Ballot

To view a sample of your personal ballot, visit the My Voter Page (MVP) on the Georgia Secretary of State’s website. You will need to create an MVP login using your name, county and birth date to download your ballot.

On the next page we have provided a sample ballot (this one is for Fulton County) and an explanation of the sections you will find on your ballot.

### GCDD’S PUBLIC POLICY TEAM



DAWN ALFORD, GCDD Public Policy Director



HANNA ROSENFELD, GCDD Planning and Policy Development Specialist

# SAMPLE BALLOT

## Reading the Ballot

### Statewide Races

Every registered voter in the State of Georgia will be able to vote for all the offices in this section (highlighted in green):

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Secretary of State
- Attorney General
- Commissioner of Agriculture
- Commissioner of Insurance
- State School Superintendent
- Commissioner of Labor
- Public Service Commissioners

### Local Races

Only registered voters in designated areas can vote for the offices in this section (highlighted in gold). The ballot you receive at the polls will show ONLY your candidates here. This may include:

- US Senate & Representatives
- Georgia Senate & Representatives
- County or City Boards of Education
- County or City Boards of Commissioners
- Mayors & City Councils

### Special Items

At the end of the ballot (not pictured), special items will be listed that you will be asked to approve. It is a good idea to review these items beforehand to understand what is proposed. These may include:

- Proposed Constitutional Amendments
- Proposed Statewide Referenda
- Special Elections

FULTON COUNTY			
OFFICIAL ABSENTEE/PROVISIONAL/CHALLENGED BALLOT			
OFFICIAL GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA NOVEMBER 6, 2018			
<p>To vote, blacken the Oval (●) next to the candidate of your choice. To vote for a person whose name is not on the ballot, manually WRITE his or her name in the write-in section and blacken the Oval (●) next to the write-in section. If you desire to vote YES or NO for a PROPOSED QUESTION, blacken the corresponding Oval (●). Use only blue or black pen or pencil.</p> <p>Do not vote for more candidates than the number allowed for each specific office. Do not cross out or erase. If you erase or make other marks on the ballot or tear the ballot, your vote may not count.</p> <p>If you change your mind or make a mistake, you may return the ballot by writing "Spoiled" across the face of the ballot and return envelope. You may then mail the spoiled ballot back to your county board of registrars, and you will be issued another official absentee ballot. Alternatively, you may surrender the ballot to the poll manager of an early voting site within your county or the precinct to which you are assigned. You will then be permitted to vote a regular ballot.</p> <p><small>*I understand that the offer or acceptance of money or any other object of value to vote for any particular candidate, list of candidates, issue, or list of issues included in this election constitutes an act of voter fraud and is a felony under Georgia law.* (OCGA 21-2-285(h) and 21-2-383(a))</small></p>			
<p><b>For Governor</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BRIAN KEMP Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> STACEY ABRAMS Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> TED METZ Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For Commissioner of Insurance</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JIM BECK Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JANICE LAWS Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DONNIE FOSTER Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For U.S. Representative in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress From the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Georgia</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JOHN R. LEWIS (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State Senator From 6<sup>th</sup> District</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LEAH ALDRIDGE Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JEN JORDAN (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>
<p><b>For Lieutenant Governor</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> GEOFF DUNCAN Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> SARAH RIGGS AMICO Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State School Superintendent</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> RICHARD WOODS (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> OTHA E. THORNTON, JR. Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For U.S. Representative in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress From the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Georgia</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> KAREN HANDEL (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LUCY MCBATH Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State Senator From 21<sup>st</sup> District</b> (Vote For One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BRANDON BEACH (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NICOLE B. NASH Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>
<p><b>For Secretary of State</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BRAD RAFFENSPERGER Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JOHN BARROW Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> SMYTHE DUVAL Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For Commissioner of Labor</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> MARK BUTLER (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> RICHARD KEATLEY Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For U.S. Representative in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress From the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Georgia</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BARRY LOUDERMILK (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> FLYNN D. BROADY, JR. Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State Senator From 28<sup>th</sup> District</b> (Vote For One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> MATT BRASS (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>
<p><b>For Attorney General</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> CHRIS CARR (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> CHARLIE BAILEY Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For Public Service Commissioner</b> (To Succeed Chuck Eaton) (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> CHUCK EATON (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LINDY MILLER Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> RYAN GRAHAM Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For U.S. Representative in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress From the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Georgia</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DAVID CALLAHAN Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DAVID SCOTT (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State Senator From 32<sup>nd</sup> District</b> (Vote For One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> KAY KIRKPATRICK (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> CHRISTINE TRIEBSCH Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>
<p><b>For Commissioner of Agriculture</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> GARY BLACK (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> FRED SWANN Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For Public Service Commissioner</b> (To Succeed Tricia Pridemore) (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> TRICIA PRIDEMORE (Incumbent) Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DAWN A. RANDOLPH Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> JOHN TURPISH Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For U.S. Representative in 116<sup>th</sup> Congress From the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Georgia</b> (Vote for One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DAVID CALLAHAN Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DAVID SCOTT (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>	<p><b>For State Senator From 35<sup>th</sup> District</b> (Vote For One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DONZELLA JAMES (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>
<p><b>For State Senator From 36<sup>th</sup> District</b> (Vote For One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NAN ORROCK (Incumbent) Democrat</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p>			
<p><b>TURN BALLOT OVER TO CONTINUE VOTING</b></p>			

You can review your sample ballot at My Voter Page at [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov)

## CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR



Stacey Abrams



Brian Kemp



Ted Metz

In the following sections, we have highlighted some of the candidates' platforms we find relevant, namely their views on Medicaid and their priorities if elected.

### Governor

The former House Minority Leader (2010-2017) and Atlanta resident **Stacey Abrams**, Democrat, believes that, "Georgia must pursue expansion of Medicaid as both a stabilization and growth model for delivery of healthcare and for economic growth." Indeed, Abrams went so far as to say that her first priority if elected would be to "[see through the] expansion of Medicaid in the State of Georgia to cover 500,000 Georgians; save our rural hospitals; and make certain that we start to create the thousands of jobs to which Georgia is eligible if we expand Medicaid in the State."

An Athens resident, **Brian Kemp**, Republican, has served as Secretary of State of Georgia since 2010. When asked what his first priority would be if elected, Kemp responded, "Well, day one I am going to create a Putting Georgians First Committee that will be made up of business people, not bureaucrats. It is going to start looking at cutting government regulations, cutting red tape. This is really part of a Conservative Four Point Plan I have to make Georgia number one for small businesses in the country." Regarding Medicaid, Kemp has reportedly said we should be lowering healthcare costs without giving more funding to Medicaid.

about Medicaid expansion, Metz stated, "With removal of strings attached to Medicaid grants which put 159 agencies in-between people and their doctors, ending certificate of needs for competitive facilities, and using innovative approaches to healthcare, expansion would be the right thing."

### State School Superintendent

The current State School Superintendent, **Richard Woods**, has served since 2015 and is running for a second term as the Republican candidate. Woods is a Georgia native. Raised in Fitzgerald, he now calls Tifton home. A former public school teacher, Woods created a Student Advisory Council and launched the "Georgia Career Pipeline tool to help local districts match career pathways offered at high schools to area job demands." When asked whether the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support, or GNETS, was constitutional, Woods did not commit either way. He did note however, "I think [it provides] a good role. [GNETS acts] as a bridge. Instead of moving from the home school to a residential facility, it gives you a middle ground."

Woods is challenged by the Democratic nominee **Otha Thornton**. An

# Statewide Elections

Chair of the Libertarian Party of Georgia, **Ted Metz** lives in South Cobb. When asked

Elberton native, Thornton currently lives in Richmond Hill with his wife and two children. He was the first African American male to serve as President of the National PTA, and Thornton's top priorities include empowering families and educators, providing wrap-around services for children and updating the state's funding formula for schools to include technology. In response to a Georgia school re-instituting paddling as a punishment, Thornton stated, "My plan to bring wrap-around services and more mental health professionals will help Georgia schools progress rather than regress."

**Dr. Sonia Francis-Rolle** is also running for State Superintendent as a write-in candidate. Francis-Rolle is a Republican and a past teacher in the DeKalb and Fulton County school systems. Francis-Rolle has pointed out that "the increasing need for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) require a great deal of flexibility for parents and educators to decide for themselves how to set goals for adequate progress." Additionally, Francis-Rolle advocates for "statewide special education training" and "smaller class sizes for students with discipline challenges."

### Commissioner of Insurance

The Office of Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner oversees the

## CANDIDATES FOR STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT



Richard Woods



Otha Thornton



Dr. Sonia Francis-Rolle



insurance industry including life, car and medical insurance, as well as fire safety regulation. The current commissioner, Ralph Hudgens, is stepping down after eight years. Candidates will focus on Medicaid expansion, access to affordable healthcare and coverage for those with multiple diagnoses.

The Democratic nominee, **Janice Laws**, emigrated from Jamaica and has called Georgia home for 15 years. The owner of an insurance agency, Laws' background lies within the realm of home, auto and life insurance. Laws has stated that her "first order of business" is to "address the cost of automobile insurance." As for health insurance, her focus is on, "fraud and predatory insurance practices" that plague "seniors, veterans and other at-risk families."

Laws is challenged by Republican party nominee **Jim Beck**. A Carrollton resident, Beck previously worked as the Deputy Insurance Commissioner and an insurance lobbyist. Beck's priorities include increasing accessibility to the public by creating, "four rolling regional offices" and hosting telephone town halls to discuss potential rate increases. Other key components of his platform include "doubling the penalties on insurance companies guilty of victimizing" seniors and veterans.

The Libertarian candidate for Insurance Commissioner is **Donnie Foster**. A truck driver, Foster's

experience includes time in the US Army and as a deputy sheriff. His platform includes empowering local fire departments to approve home additions, lowering the minimum amount of auto and liability insurance coverage required by law, and repealing the requirement that, "all persons applying for a permit to the Office of Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner" supply proof of legal residency.

### Secretary of State

As for Secretary of State, incumbent Brian Kemp stepped down to run for Governor. This important office oversees many state activities, such as business licensing and elections. Candidates will focus on the challenges that 1.3 million Georgians with disabilities face when trying to have their voices heard in the election process. Specifically, accessible polling centers, easy-to-understand language on ballots and easy-to-follow absentee ballot eligibility requirements.

**John Barrow** is the Democratic candidate for Secretary of State. A former US congressman representing the 12th district in Georgia, Barrow calls Athens home. Barrow believes that the Secretary of State's office is the, "most important office in Georgia that no one thinks about." Barrow

is a proponent of switching to a paper ballot system that uses optical scanners. Barrow is also vocal about the need for gerrymandering reform, citing

his own personal experience as a congressman whose district was redrawn multiple times.

The Republican candidate is **Brad Raffensperger**. Calling Johns Creek home, Raffensperger is the CEO of a specialty engineering design firm. Raffensperger is a proponent of replacing income tax with a FairTax, where purchases are taxed as opposed to income. Other components include strengthening voter ID laws, reducing sex and drug trafficking and updating the voter system to include "paper ballot verification."

The final candidate for Secretary of State is **Smythe Duval**. A Libertarian, Duval is a Marietta resident. A military veteran and registered nurse, Duval currently works as the IT director for a large medical practice. He advocates to adopt a ranked-choice voting system, allow same-day voter registration and to impose congressional term limits. Duval wants a reduction in barriers independent and minor party candidates face running for office and to eliminate gerrymandering.

### Your Vote Counts! Vote November 6, 2018

It is important to note that GCDD does not endorse any candidate and that the enclosed information encompasses only a small piece of a larger political platform for each candidate. We encourage you reach out to them with questions of your own – and to vote.

### CANDIDATES FOR SECRETARY OF STATE



John Barrow



Brad Raffensperger



Smythe Duval

### CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE



Janice Laws



Jim Beck



Donnie Foster



Proud graduates of Kennesaw State's inclusive college program

## Include College Campaign Brings Focus to Programs for Students with Disabilities

*Include College* is the newest campaign launched by the Georgia Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) to bring attention to nine inclusive college programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) across Georgia.

Currently, the following universities, colleges and technical colleges have inclusive programs in Georgia: University of Georgia, Columbus State University, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, East Georgia State College, Albany Technical College, University of West Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology and Kennesaw State University.

There are 140 students enrolled in the nine programs, but plans are to grow exponentially. "The goal of this campaign is for parents, students, family members and educators to include college in a student's transition planning as an option after high school," said Susanna Miller-Raines, statewide coordinator for GAIPSEC.



**Possibilities for Students  
with Intellectual  
and Developmental  
Disabilities**

*Include College* is a clearing house that allows parents, students and other stakeholders to receive complete information on the college programs and steps to include in planning for life after high school. This includes understanding all of the colleges' different offerings, how to plan for college options throughout the student's K-12 career and various agencies and organizations that can support parents through the process.

Georgia's college programs are inclusive in campus life and academic offerings, and they also prepare students with job training and independent living skills. Students with disabilities who attend inclusive college programs have a higher chance to receive job opportunities in competitive, integrated employment. In Georgia, 75% of the 2017 graduates are now employed.

With a grant from the US Department of Education, the programs originated in 2010, and GAIPSEC aims to build the capacity to serve 100 new students per year across Georgia.

The campaign is supported by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) with support to its Five Year Plan goal of

education. Specifically, GCDD aims to expand the number of successful inclusive post-secondary educational programs in Georgia to 13 by 2022.

### **About GAIPSEC:**

Georgia Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium is dedicated to ensuring that every Georgia student has access to learning after high school, regardless of intellectual or developmental disability. The Consortium is made up of colleges and universities, community support agencies, families and K-12 educators. Together, its mission ensures that every Georgia student with an intellectual or developmental disability has the opportunity to realize his or her full potential.



Project WOLVES at University of West Georgia is the newest inclusive college program in Georgia.

[Learn More about College for Students with Disabilities.](#)

# FAST FACTS



**NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED**

in State of Georgia Inclusive College Programs in the 2018 – 19 Academic Year

**75%**

of 2017 Graduates


of Inclusive College Programs are employed



**9** NUMBER OF INCLUSIVE COLLEGE PROGRAMS in the State of Georgia

**&**

**1** GEORGIA COLLEGE preparing to start a new program



**88%**

of Inclusive College STUDENTS GRADUATE from their program



**NO. OF INCLUSIVE COLLEGE OPTIONS** throughout the United States

**\$500,000**

**FROM THE STATE**

supports students & programming for Inclusive Colleges in Georgia



**\$500,000**

**FROM THE US GOV**

for five years (2015-2020) from a Department of Education Grant



First Data employees

# Transforming Employment for People with Disabilities

by Jennifer Bosk

**There's a sea change coming in the lives of people with disabilities and its focus is employment training, work inclusion and financial stability. It's already happening in Georgia, and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is spreading the word as fast as they can.**

On May 8 of this year, Georgia's Employment First Act (HB 831) was signed into law by Governor Nathan Deal. The Act promotes employment as the first and preferred option offered to people with disabilities receiving government-funded services.



**Employment First has a baseline, but we have a ton of work to do.**

This new legislation forms a 14-member Employment First Council made up of individuals with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities and various representatives of workforce development agencies in Georgia and is overseen by the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA).

## Next Steps for Employment First

"Kudos that the Act passed as it gives us a good direction," said Doug Crandall, Public Service Faculty at the University of Georgia, Institute on Human Development and Disability. "Employment First has a baseline, but we have a ton of work to do. The first thing is for us all to come together – the people with disabilities, their families, the providers and employers."

GCDD's goal is to research and make recommendations for future policies so Employment First is implemented throughout the State, as well as to ensure competitive, integrated employment is at the forefront of all state-funded services.

Competitive, integrated employment, as defined by the Georgia General Assembly, is "work, including self-employment, in the labor market performed on a full-time or part-time basis in a setting in which an individual with a disability interacts with individuals without disabilities in all aspects of the job function and for which such individual with a disability is compensated at or above the level of salary and benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals without disabilities (*Georgia House Bill 831, 2018, p. 2*)."

This line of work is close to Crandall's heart. He co-authored a guide about the public policy alignment approach used in Employment First states around the country. And, his research found that government-funded programs were fragmented and often disconnected from the ultimate outcome of supporting job seekers with disabilities in obtaining and keeping competitive, integrated employment. The guide shares a nine-month, three-phase approach to using collaboration and aligning resources to achieve systems change for Employment First.

### GCDD's New Technical Assistance Center

In Georgia, Crandall's work focuses mainly on bringing state agencies and providers of services for people with disabilities in alignment with what Employment First is working to achieve. As a start, he is behind the new GCDD-funded Technical Assistance Center, Advancing Employment.



**Advancing Employment**  
Building a community for inclusive employment in Georgia

The center's initiative will develop a provider transformation plan based on strengths and needs of each provider regarding best practices in employment. In addition, providers will have access to customized webinars, online trainings and multiple resources related to best practices and research in employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The work with agencies and providers is two-fold: first they must believe competitive, integrated employment is the first and

preferred option; and then, they must analyze what it will take to truly transform their agencies, along with their leadership and boards, to have an awareness of the economic life of the community.

Provider agencies Lookout Mountain Community Services, LaFayette; DeKalb Community Service Board, Decatur; and Aspire Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Services, Albany have started working and coordinating with Advancing Employment to learn and bring best practices for competitive employment in their organizations.

### Implementing Integrated Employment in the Workplace

It is also important to talk to employers about integrated employment in language that businesses understand – economics, retaining staff and creating a new customer base.

One company that is not only ready, but has implemented competitive, integrated employment is First Data, a global financial service company, with headquarters in Atlanta. Its commitment to an overarching goal of diversity and inclusion at the company began four years ago when Frank Bisignano became CEO. He made a strong commitment to hire veterans, and as they began offering training for people with service and non-service related disabilities, First Data saw a much bigger opportunity.

"We wanted to go past the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and do everything we could to expand our recruitment pools of qualified candidates for First Data jobs," explains Vivian



#### PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT

- [Lookout Mountain Community Services, LaFayette](#)
- [DeKalb Community Service Board, Decatur](#)
- [Aspire Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Services, Albany](#)

We wanted to go past the ADA requirements and do everything we could to expand our recruitment pools of qualified candidates for First Data jobs.



## AMERICA'S WORKFORCE: EMPOWERING ALL

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

#NDEAM | [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep)

### October is National Disability Employment Month.

Greentree, senior vice president and head of First Data's Global Corporate Citizenship.

The company's inclusion goals led to the creation of eight employee resource groups, one of which is THRIVE, a disability awareness leadership council within First Data. The company says, "THRIVE was established to create a network and support system for individuals across the ability spectrum and their allies, providing internal and external awareness of the best practices within First Data. We believe that all owner-associates can succeed and flourish because of their unique abilities, not in spite of their disabilities."

THRIVE offers policies and programs that help in allowing people to bring their whole self to work and bring a sense of belonging to the team. The focus is for team members to be inspired to share their talents and passion and not worry about "will I fit in?"

There are 25 THRIVE chapters in First Data globally. In the Atlanta THRIVE chapter, there are currently 71 members. First Data also offers confidential peer-to-peer

employee programs that connect people facing the same challenges. Paired by interests and location, the programs work to create a culture where everyone uses their energy to create and come up with new ideas for First Data, rather than being isolated and not feeling a part of the corporate culture.

"If corporations don't figure inclusion out, they will lose out on employee talent as well as clients, revenue and profitability," Greentree feels. "When you provide employees with opportunities for engagement, it always pays dividends."



**The focus is for team members to be inspired to share their talents and passion and not worry about "will I fit in?"**

And, First Data aims to expand its vision to the true meaning of inclusion. "It's not just enough for a company to be about diversity, it's inclusion and belonging that make it work for people to better

be able to do their job. At First Data, our focus is to foster overall inclusion into the fabric of our company," said Greentree.

To that end, the company also added an employee group for caregivers of people with disabilities, addressing the unique challenges those individuals often face.

This focus on people with disabilities is extended to First Data's supply chain which is open to diverse vendors. On any contract with a small business (under \$5 million), several owned and operated by people with disabilities, First Data offers to pay the net bill within 30 days – a huge boon for many small businesses who find access to capital challenging.

"We are doing everything we can to expand our recruitment pools for First Data jobs," confirms Greentree.

### Saving with STABLE Accounts in Georgia

That's exciting news for people with disabilities looking to enter or move up in the workforce, and the mindset change that Douglas Jackson, the deputy director of STABLE accounts, is relying on.

For decades, people with disabilities who wanted to work faced a huge disincentive. If they wanted to save money for a place to live or a car or any expense, people were jeopardizing their benefits. Medicaid and Social Security benefits were lowered if an individual with a disability earned over a set amount. That led to attitudes of "why work?" or, for those who were working, to spend money quickly or hide it somewhere.

Then came the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014, known as the ABLE Act, which allowed states to offer tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities.

“ABLE accounts serve as a benefit to work,” explained Jackson. “Not only can you save without penalty to your benefits, but you can also guide your savings into investments to grow your income and not be taxed on any gains nor taxed when you spend the money. STABLE, as the accounts are known in Georgia, offers five different options for investments.”

even for things like Uber, Lyft or public transportation. It works for services anyone would typically buy,” Jackson said.

### Coming Out Ahead by Working

Jackson wants that sea change to include a mindset change that people with disabilities utilizing STABLE accounts will now come out ahead by working.

“The rules have changed, and it makes sense to take advantage of all that is being offered to people with disabilities today,” he said.

In Georgia, about 382 people have opened STABLE accounts and have collectively saved and invested \$1.8 million. But, there are over 200,000 people eligible for these accounts in Georgia, which means the State has a long way to go.

[Learn more about STABLE accounts in Georgia or open your own account.](#)

People with disabilities who work not only bring an increased benefit to themselves, but also to the general public.

In a recently published article in the TASH journal regarding a new study exploring cost efficiency of supported employment throughout the United States, real jobs have a return of \$3,016 per year to taxpayers. Supported employees’ work generated a cost-benefit ratio of \$1.46 for each dollar spent.

With the combination of various resources now available for people with disabilities to become more financially independent and employers who are starting to take notice, there is a groundbreaking transformation for employment in the disability community on the way.

**UNIQUE TO STABLE IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DIRECT DEPOSIT OF ONE’S PAYCHECK, OFFERING THE BONUS OF SAVING BEFORE YOU SPEND.**



Also unique to STABLE is the opportunity for direct deposit of one’s paycheck, offering the bonus of saving before you spend. In addition, STABLE allows for employers to contribute to their employees’ accounts, even matching a percentage of what the employee puts in.

STABLE offers the freedom for the individual to spend their savings on a variety of expenses including education, housing, transportation, employment support, health prevention and wellness, assistive technology, and other miscellaneous expenses such as legal fees or home improvements.

“We offer individuals a loadable debit card which works anywhere,

Save & Invest with STABLE Accounts!



**\$50** That’s all you need to open a STABLE account.

**SAVE UP TO \$15,000** every year in your STABLE account.

Your money **EARN\$ INTEREST** & builds financial Security.

If employed, you can Save an additional **\$12,000 PER YEAR**

Use the **Money** you **Save** for disability-related expenses.

In Georgia, people with disabilities have **Saved \$1.8 Million!**



# What's Happening in Washington?

## Federal Disability Policy Updates

by Alison Barkoff, Director of Advocacy,  
Center for Public Representation

August is usually quiet, with members of Congress on recess to their home districts and a slow pace in Washington. Not this year! Summer has been filled with the Senate and disability advocates, working on the nomination and confirmation process for a new US Supreme Court Justice.

### Judge Kavanaugh's Nomination to the US Supreme Court

In late June, Justice Anthony Kennedy announced he would retire from the Supreme Court. President Trump quickly nominated Judge Brett Kavanaugh to fill the seat.

**Why does who is on the Supreme Court matter from a disability perspective?**

Why does who is on the Supreme Court matter from a disability perspective? Many people focus on Congress, or federal agencies, when they think about federal disability laws and programs important to people with disabilities. But the Supreme Court has a critical role, too. The Supreme Court makes final decisions on what federal laws and the Constitution mean. This includes many laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (prohibits disability discrimination and provides a right to community

integration); Medicaid (provides critical health care services for people with disabilities, including waivers and other home and community-based services); the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ensures students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education); and the Affordable Care Act (expands access to health care and provides protections for people with pre-existing conditions). How a Supreme Court Justice interprets these laws will have a huge impact on the opportunity for people with disabilities to live, work, learn and participate in the community.

Supreme Court Justices are appointed for life. The nomination process is the one chance for the public and Senate to take a close look at the nominee's record and decide whether he or she is the right person to serve on the Supreme Court. The best way to see how a judge could decide about laws in the future is to review their past decisions. Kavanaugh has served for more than a decade on the US Court of Appeals in DC

When disability groups analyzed his record, it raised serious concerns about the decisions he would make about disability rights, health care, education and civil rights enforcement as a final decision-maker on the Supreme Court, potentially for decades to come. That is why so many disability groups – including many groups that usually don't weigh in on nominations, like The Arc of the United States – decided to oppose Judge Kavanaugh's nomination.

Kavanaugh's record on disability issues was central at his confirmation hearings on September 4-7. Kavanaugh wrote a decision in a case called *Doe v. DC* that involved people with intellectual disabilities who DC forced to have elective medical procedures without consulting them. A district court found that DC had violated the individuals'



**ALISON BARKOFF** is the Director of Advocacy at the Center for Public Representation. She works on policy and litigation related to community integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, including *Olmstead* enforcement, Medicaid policy, employment, housing and education.



rights. On appeal, Kavanaugh disagreed and ruled that it was legal not to ask them what they wanted. At Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing, Liz Weintraub, a national disability advocate with an intellectual disability, testified about her concern about his lack of respect for the self-determination of people with disabilities: "If Kavanaugh is confirmed, I'm afraid that my right to make decisions for myself will be taken away." Weintraub made history as the first person with an intellectual disability to testify at a Senate confirmation hearing.

The confirmation hearing also highlighted Kavanaugh's decisions about the Affordable Care Act, and whether he might strike down the ACA's important protections for people with pre-existing conditions – an issue that could reach the Supreme Court this year.

Jackson Corbin, a 13-year-old boy with complex medical needs due to Noonan's Syndrome, testified about the impact that appointing Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court could have on people with disabilities: "If you destroy protections for pre-existing conditions, you leave me and all kids and adults like me without care and without the ability to afford our care, all because of who we are."

Despite the serious concerns the disability community and others raised, Kavanaugh was confirmed by the US Senate on October 6 by a vote of 50-48.

Nonetheless, his nomination process helped educate the disability community about the importance of the courts and elevated disability issues as an important topic in the confirmation of any judge.

### Other Issues on the Horizon:

There has been movement this summer on a few issues that we have previously covered:

#### Money Follows the Person

**(MFP):** MFP gives states additional federal Medicaid funds to help transition people from nursing homes, Intermediate Care Facilities and other institutions to the community. MFP has expired, and all states (including Georgia) will run out of money this year unless it is reauthorized. In early September, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on the bill to reauthorize MFP called the EMPOWER Care Act. On September 13, the bill passed out of the Committee. The good news is the bill is finally moving with growing support.

Unfortunately, the House amended the bill from a five-year reauthorization to one year. While one year is better than none, we will continue to advocate for a longer time. The bill has to pass the full House and Senate, but we are hopefully on track for this after the midterm elections. You can help by educating your members of Congress about the importance of MFP and the need for it to be reauthorized immediately.

#### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regulations:

We continue to monitor the potential opening of the WIOA regulations by the Department of Education (ED). WIOA established competitive, integrated employment as a clear national priority. In May, ED issued a notice that they plan to reopen the WIOA regulations, which could include weakening the definition of "competitive,

integrated employment (CIE)." The notice said that could happen as early as September. If so, it will be important for you to share with ED the importance of CIE in your life.

#### Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS):

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued rules in 2014 that set standards for all Medicaid-funded HCBS. States must submit Settings Transition Plans (STPs) to CMS, describing how that state will comply. In August 2018, CMS sent a letter to Georgia with steps the State needs to take for a final approved STP. ([Read the letter from CMS.](#))

## Stay Informed on the Issues

- [Learn more about Supreme Court Nomination of Kavanaugh, including statements from disability organizations and resources.](#)
- [Read the full review of Kavanaugh's record.](#)
- [Read the statements about Kavanaugh from disability organizations.](#)
- [Watch Liz Weintraub testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee.](#)
- [Read Weintraub's written testimony.](#)
- [Watch Jackson Corbin testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee.](#)
- [Read Corbin's written testimony.](#)
- [Read more about Money Follows the Person.](#)
- [Read about the EMPOWER Care Act.](#)
- [Read about the HCBS Settings Rule, the status of Georgia's plan, and how you can get involved.](#)

As you can see, there's a lot to follow and stay involved with in federal policy that impacts people with disabilities and their families, in Georgia and across the country!



Members of "The Fam Squad" - Mandel Montilus, Les McBride and De'onte Brown - became friends when they started attending the inclusive IDEAL program at Georgia State University.

## The Fam Squad

Sometimes, when you go to college, you get lucky enough to find a new set of friends, people who will almost certainly be your friends for the rest of your life. That is definitely true of "The Fam Squad." They hit it off the first week they met. Now, they hang out when they're not in class, often going to lunch, the library, and the student center together.

When Les McBride, De'onte Brown and Mandel Montilus started attending the IDEAL program at Georgia State University, they knew immediately they felt lucky not only to be in school, but most especially to have found each other. IDEAL, Inclusive Digital Expression and Literacy, is a new inclusive two-year program at GSU that accepted their first students with intellectual disabilities in Fall 2016.

Students enroll in or audit courses offered by GSU colleges and academic departments; complete work-study and intern-

ship experiences related to media, communications and/or the arts; and participate in a variety of extracurricular activities on campus.

The young men of "The Fam Squad" are three of the five students currently enrolled in IDEAL. Spenser Norris, a trained special education teacher and clinical rehabilitation counselor, is the University Inclusion Coordinator. She says they are hoping to grow the program to ten students in

Fall 2018, as well as establish a dual enrollment program with DeKalb County. Much like other inclusive postsecondary education programs, they rely on the support of peer mentors who have similar interests and career goals as the program participants. Peer mentors are recruited from the Honors College and other parts of the University and volunteer 5-10 hours a week to assist with going to class, study skills and finding social opportunities.

Les, De'onte, and Mandel are all studying in different programs that loosely relate under the theme of creative and new media. Les would like to become a music producer in the recording industry. Mandel hopes to be a game designer. De'onte is a film student with a penchant for horror.

Aspiring filmmaker De'onte, 22, has an intellectual disability and developmental delay. He remembers the first time he fell in love with films. He was watching something one day and just started wondering

about how much time it had taken them to make all the parts of it. It made him curious about the process. His favorite scary movie is Happy Death Day. "These types of movies just make me feel more alive," he says.

De'onte has a twin brother who is in the Army, currently serving in Poland. They video chat weekly, but he really misses him because it's been more than a year since they've seen each other in person. For his final project, De'onte wants to make a documentary about the IDEAL program.

Mandel, the game designer, is a 23-year-old man with autism spectrum disorder and speech and language disorder. Mandel's peer mentors, Teymbi and Kat, help him stay focused on his game designs and ideas. His original



**For each of them, the day they found out they'd gotten into the program was also a day they'll never forget.**



Les, De'onte and Mandel are all studying in different programs that loosely relate under the theme of creative and new media.

inspiration for gaming was Pokémon. He shows us a version of a Pokéball he's doodled on his hand. You can find some games he's working on at an experimental website called [Twinery.org](http://Twinery.org). He says the thing he likes most about games is being the champion.

Les, the music producer, is 19. He has mild intellectual disability and specific learning disorder. Growing up with the music of T.I., Li'l Wayne and other Atlanta-based hip-hop artists, his favorite song is "I'm Still Here" by T.I. He thinks it has a great motivational message to follow. No matter

of them, the day they found out they'd gotten into the program was also a day they'll never forget. "It was the best day of my life!" is a sentiment echoed by each of them.

None of these young men currently have Medicaid waivers, and they have no plans to apply at this time. This underscores why support for a program of this nature is important, as the need for NOW/COMP waivers is diminished for IPSE (inclusive post secondary education) alumni as many are gainfully employed, receiving employee benefits, and are therefore less dependent on state resources. Another IDEAL student has stated many times that "Without IDEAL, he would be sitting at home bored and feeling like he is missing out."

Often young adults with intellectual disabilities find themselves isolated when they do not belong to a community of peers, often feeling misunderstood, or eventually feeling like it is not worth the effort to make friends or try new things. Like many young people who may feel isolated, this phenomenon can lead to depression, anxiety, or people existing in unhealthy relationship with others to fulfill a need for belonging.

As a part of their program, they've had an opportunity to participate in advocacy, going to the State Capitol to speak to legislators about the IDEAL program. If we brought an elected official in to be a part of the conversation we were having, they would want them to know how excellent their program is so they could have more students "join the college life, to see what all the fuss is about!"

Les says, "There's a lot of kids that need help and want to do better, and do better things." He talks about people who have disabilities wanting to change, as well as school shootings and how much fear there is. When we ask everyone what they want people in general to know, De'onte says "I want them to know that they can be anything they want to be."

**THERE'S A LOT OF KIDS THAT NEED HELP AND WANT TO DO BETTER, AND DO BETTER THINGS. I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT THEY CAN BE ANYTHING THEY WANT TO BE.**



what circumstances you come from or what's happened to you, you've got to keep doing your work and keep going. Les has lost important people in his life like his grandparents, and he's an only child. Sometimes he's felt isolated, but he feels it's important to stay positive. He wants to put out work through his music that encourages people to stop violence.

Each member of The Fam Squad talks us through the process of applying to be in the IDEAL program. They said that it took a lot of paperwork and an interview at the IDEAL office. They all remember the interview vividly, how they had to speak about their dreams and aspirations. For each



The Fam Squad show off the robot, Pepper, who can dance and

With that, the guys take us on a tour of the [Creative Media Industries Institute](http://CreativeMediaIndustriesInstitute.org). They show us the robot, Pepper, who can dance and will ask you if you want to take a selfie with her. At the end of our time, they led us back to the IDEAL office, which has a common area with posters, pictures and quotes from retreats and meetings they've had together in the past. As we say goodbye, the group is ready to try the hot dog place that's just opened up around the corner. It is Friday after all.

**This story is a part of the GCDD Storytelling Project. It was written by Shannon M. Turner and photographed by Lynsey Weatherspoon. Read the extended story on [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org).**



# VOTING - A Fundamental Right

by Ilias N. Savakis



The fundamental right to vote is granted to all US citizens under the US Constitution. Justin Dart, considered by many to be the “father” of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), once said, “Vote as if your life depends on it – because it does.” What does this mean? The people who are elected to national, state and local office make up the laws of the state that we live in, as well as the laws that apply to the entire country. That includes making laws regarding federal and state programs that provide services and supports to people with disabilities to live full lives in the community.

However, a gap still remains between voters with disabilities who cast their vote on election day compared to people without disabilities. A study published by Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations reveals that although 16 million people with disabilities reported voting in the November 2016 General Election, the voter turnout of people with disabilities was 6% lower than that of people without disabilities. If people with disabilities voted at the same rate as people without disabilities, there would be an estimated 2.2 million more voters nationally.

## So why aren't people with disabilities voting at the same rate as people without disabilities?

Accessibility is one issue. A 2012 study by Rutgers University, funded by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), indicated that 30% of people with disabilities in the United States reported difficulty in voting compared to only 8% of people without disabilities in the United States. The most common problems

reported were difficulty with reading or seeing the ballot (12%) and understanding how to vote or use voting equipment (10%). The US Government Accountability Office observed polling place accessibility at 178 polling places during the 2016 election. One hundred seven of the 178 polling places had one or more issues with accessibility for people with disabilities. The US Government Accountability Office fully examined the voting stations inside 137 polling places. Eighty-nine of the 137 polling places had an accessible voting system that risked the privacy and independence of a person with a disability.

Another issue is a lack of training for election officials, poll workers and people with disabilities about the right to vote for people with disabilities. According to the US Department of Justice (DOJ), Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section, people with disabilities have often been prevented from voting because of assumptions made by election officials and poll workers about their capabilities to vote. This is particularly true for people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities, as well as people with traumatic brain injuries. The DOJ states that this often happens because poll workers are volunteers, they usually have many responsibilities, they often do not know about all of the federal and state laws that protect people with disabilities in the voting process and they do not always get specific training on the issues that voters with disabilities experience.

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**A VOTER WITH A DISABILITY IS NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE SOMEONE ASSIST THEM AT THE POLLS - IT IS THEIR CHOICE.** ”

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## What protections are in place for voters with disabilities?

There are several laws that protect people with disabilities and voting. Each law serves a different purpose. **The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)**, one of the oldest pieces of legislation enacted to protect voters with disabilities, requires that election officials allow a voter with a disability to

REPORTS OF VOTING DIFFICULTY



MOST COMMON PROBLEMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



receive assistance from a person of the voter’s choosing, including a family member or a poll worker, when casting their vote. A voter with a disability is not required to have someone assist them at the polls – it is their *choice*.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, enacted in 1990 and revised in 2010, provides protections to people with disabilities throughout all aspects of life, including voting. Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to assure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote as people without disabilities do.

**The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)** requires jurisdictions responsible for conducting federal elections (i.e. all US states) to provide at least one accessible voting system for people with disabilities at each polling place. The accessible voting system must allow for the same privacy and independence that voters without disabilities receive. A fully accessible voting system should

include large displays, magnifiers, lowered machines for people who use wheelchairs and auxiliary aids that aid people with visual and hearing impairments. However, many voters across the country report that these features aren’t always available to them at their polling place – including tables that are too high and aren’t adjustable, as well as aging voting machines malfunctioning and not in working condition. The HAVA also provides funding to organizations, including state Protection and Advocacy Organizations such as the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), to help ensure that people with disabilities retain their right to vote.

States often have varying policies in place that can further affect a person’s right to vote, such as the right of a person with a disability under a guardianship. A common misconception by both poll workers and supporters of people with disabilities in Georgia is that a person’s right to vote is removed if they have a guardian. However,

- <https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/statistics/>
- [https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/documents/PressReleases/kruse\\_and\\_schur\\_-\\_2016\\_disability\\_turnout.pdf](https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/documents/PressReleases/kruse_and_schur_-_2016_disability_turnout.pdf)
- [https://www.ada.gov/ada\\_voting/ada\\_voting\\_ta.htm](https://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm)
- [https://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga\\_180931.pdf](https://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_180931.pdf)

SOURCES

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

The Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), the Protection and Advocacy System for people with disabilities in Georgia, operates a voter hotline, weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM and from 7 AM – 7 PM on primary and general election days. The GAO can be reached at **(404) 885-1234** or **(800) 537-2329**.

The Elections Division of Georgia’s Secretary of State’s Office can also assist with any issues that arise when registering to vote or on primary and general election days. The office can be reached at **(404) 656-2871** or **(844) 753-2871**.

Voters can also contact the State of Georgia’s Office of the Attorney General to file a voter complaint at **(404) 656-3300**.

the right to vote is only removed if it is specifically mentioned in the guardianship order. As a result, a person with a disability can register to vote and cast a ballot for the candidate of their choice without the permission of a guardian.

**What can you do if your right to vote is obstructed?**

If you believe that your right to vote is being interfered with, either because of issues that you are experiencing with registering to vote or casting your vote, there are resources available to help ensure that your voice is heard and your vote counts.



Ilias N. Savakis is an Advocate and Program Coordinator for both the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) and the Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injuries (PATBI) programs. Savakis has become nationally recognized for his work with voting rights, working to assure that people with disabilities in Georgia exercise their right to vote.



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## — OCTOBER

October 17-19  
**Developmental Disabilities and Sexuality**  
Atlanta, GA  
[Register online](#)

October 24  
**SUN Self-Advocacy Planning Sessions**  
Columbus, GA  
[Register FREE online](#)

October 24  
**GA Medicaid Basics & HCBS (Dallas/Paulding County)**  
Dallas, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

October 25  
**Peer Support Meet Up**  
disABILITY LINK - Tucker, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

October 27  
**From Lockers to Lockdown: Black Boys, Special Education and the School to Prison Pipeline**  
Gwinnett County, GA [Register FREE online](#)

October 27  
**Lekotek Halloween Party**  
Tucker, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

October 30  
**SUN Self-Advocacy Planning Sessions**  
Augusta, GA  
[Register FREE online](#)

## — NOVEMBER

November 2  
**KSU Academy of Inclusive Learning Open House**  
Kennesaw State, GA [Register FREE online](#)

November 3  
**Sensory Friendly Saturdays**  
Children's Museum of Atlanta  
[Get tickets online](#)

November 3  
**Stonecrest Kidz Festival**  
Stonecrest, GA  
[Register FREE online](#)



**Vote in the Midterm Elections  
Tuesday,  
November 6**

November 7  
**Lekotek Silent Auction**  
Atlanta, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

November 8-10  
**The Arc's National Convention**  
Nashville, TN  
[Register online](#)

November 14  
**Supported Decision Making**  
Macon, GA  
[Register FREE online](#)

November 28-30  
**2018 TASH Conference**  
Portland, OR  
[Register online](#)

## — DECEMBER

December 3  
**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**  
[Find more information online](#)

December 6  
**Annual Consumer Appreciation Party**  
disABILITY LINK - Decatur, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

## — JANUARY

January 10-11, 2019  
**GCDD Quarterly Meeting**  
Atlanta, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

January 14, 2019  
**2019 Georgia Legislative Session begins**  
Atlanta, GA  
[Find more information online](#)

**To find out about more events across the State, visit [GCDD's Calendar of Events](#).**