Washington Seminar Conference Call Notes

January 20, 2019

Student Leadership Weekend Call

Called to order: 7:30 PM

Requirements for all Student Leadership attendees:

* RSVP to the Student Leadership Weekend
* Join informational conference call
* Must envelop themselves fully in Washington Seminar activities
* Must attend Washington Seminar from Sunday to Wednesday
* NABS Winter Seminar from 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM on Monday
* Legislative workshop on Monday afternoon
* Great Gathering In
* Federation Fiesta
* Specific volunteer opportunities throughout the week
* Meetings with legislators on The Hill on Tuesday and Wednesday
* Reception on Tuesday night from 5:00 to 6:30 PM
* Check in with NABS Board point of contact upon arrival to the Student Leadership Weekend
* Brief reflection (300 words), due by February 9th, describing take aways from Washington Seminar (prompt will be sent via email)

Dress code:

* Business formal
* Suit and tie
* Dressy yet comfortable shoes
* Professional attire should be used for meetings with legislators, winter seminar, and reception
* Casual attire for Federation Fiesta and downtime
* Dress for cold weather (nice jacket)
* Reach out to Syed for any questions or advice

Reminders:

* Hotel reservations are only from Sunday night through Tuesday night, so must make other arrangements if staying for longer
* List of tentative roommate assignments will be sent out later this week
* Be respectful and mindful of roommate preferences
* Be aware of your surroundings
* Focus on issues at hand, not partying
* Reputation matters

Washington Seminar Call

Justin Salisbury: Introduction to Conference Call

Syed Rizvi: Introduction for President Riccobono

President Riccobono’s Remarks:

* NFB uses all available tools to create opportunities and make change
* Washington Seminar is a chance to further our movement
* Improve equal access
* From protests on streets, to lawsuits in court and public education, allowing our voices to be heard
* Real individuals from local communities speaking authentically helps to sway Congress members
* Build relationships with new members of Congress
* Issues on legislative agenda directly impact our lives
* Create new opportunities for employment for people with disabilities
* Open up new jobs and better the economy
* Show Members of Congress that employers are not doing enough to secure equal access
* Eliminate subminimum wages and limited management positions
* NFB members have more expertise than most Congressman on these issues
* Track information on which Congressman are perceptive, empathetic, or knowledgeable
* Know how to target the right members of Congress going forward
* Benefit from past advocacy and build upon it

Justin Salisbury: Introduction to Governmental Affairs Team

Gabe Cazares: Washington Seminar is a time to rejuvenate relationships. Our agenda reflects the collective action of the Federation.

Summary of Washington Seminar Priorities by Gabe Cazares and Stephanie Flynt:

Access Technology Affordability Act (ATAA)

* Access technology is described as “devices that allow us to nonvisually access information”
* This issue was included in the 2018 Washington Seminar priorities, as well
* We removed the sunset (essentially making the old bill a 5-year trial) from this year’s bill
* We changed the tax credit amount from $2500 to $2000
* The ATAA is a refundable tax credit up to $2000 used for access technology expenses for up to 3 years

Question and Answer

Andre Hill: Would refunding of money effect SSI or SSDI?

Money would not impact benefits assuming you are still meeting the threshold for benefits. The IRS audits for eligibility for refund.

Pat McPherson: Would a phone qualify for the credit?

Access technology is used to nonvisually access information. Phones do not fall in to this category.

Sophie Trist: is the access technology specific to blindness?

It is blindness specific.

Nina Marranca: What is the time period?

$2000 within a 3-year period.

Tony Gefford: Do laptops qualify?

Laptops do not, but screenreaders do.

Lyndsay: would the credit cover accessible medical equipment?

The ATAA does not cover this component.

GAIN covers home medical equipment.

Janae Burgmeier: What information do you have to provide on tax returns to show use of credit?

Keep your receipts so that you can provide them when you are audited.

Greater Accessibility and Independence through Nonvisual Access Technology Act

* Access technology grouped into three categories: home appliances, exercise equipment, home medical equipment
* Would address safety and access concerns
* Home medical equipment: medical equipment used outside a medical facility
* The Access Board, a federal agency tasked with disability policy, will set guidelines for accessibility measures
* Address issues such as touch-screens, visual stove layouts, etc.
* Set guidelines and accessibility standards for all manufacturers of technology, exercise equipment, home appliances, and medical equipment
* Enforce standards and prosecute those who do not abide
* FDA and FCC will enforce regulations set forth by Access Board
* 3 Year period for the Access Board to come up with list of standards
* No one-size-fits-all model
* Standards must be implemented within 4 years of their creation and finalization

Question and Answer

Trisha Kulkarni: Would the act allow a mandate for universities and public facilities to have accessible equipment, or does it only apply to manufacturers?

Requires manufacturers to make all products accessible, so that all exercise equipment in public facilities is accessible.

Tony Gefford: Will this act require manufacturers to build entirely new systems, or can they be modified?

Would require appliances going forward to become accessible.

Nina Marranca: Will blind people be involved in the testing of the standards?

Access board will make proposals for standards with input from all parties.

Tony Gefford: Will there be any focus groups for suggestions to be given to the access board?

Access board will have representation of blind people and people with other disabilities.

Nina Marranca: Is the goal for the manufacturers to make all items accessible, or only a certain percentage of them?

All items must be accessible.

Andre Hill: Do we already have support from agencies such as FDA and FCC?

Access board will delegate these agencies to enforce regulations

Pat McPherson: Does this concern only large appliances?

All appliances.

Disability Employment Act

* Envisioning an employment structure for people with disabilities that does not currently exist
* Discussion of the 1938 Wagner-O’Day Act, which required that government agencies prioritize the attainment of products produced by blind people
* Discussion of the 1971 Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act, which allotted 3 billion dollars in federal contracts to nonprofit agencies to employ persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities
* The Disability Employment Act would create greater working opportunities for people with disabilities
* Every component of a company available to the nondisabled would be available to people with disabilities
* Open up the 3 billion dollars to both profit and nonprofit agencies
* Agencies must prove that at least 2 percent of the people they employ have disabilities
* Repeal the exclusion of managerial and supervisory positions for people with disabilities
* Empower employers to ensure that workplaces are accessible
* Enact employment trust fund: 5% of each contract will go to tools for assistive technology in the workplace
* Attack Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which allows employers to pay people with disabilities less than the established federal minimum wage
* The Disability Employment Act will ensure that people with disabilities are paid the minimum wage or the prevailing wage, whichever is higher
* Eliminate AbilityOne sheltered workshops and improve competitive and integrated employment opportunities
* Programs under Disability Employment will honor the priorities of the AbilityOne program
* Reinforce the Randolph-Sheppard Program
* Spur job creation and growth

Question and Answer

Nina Marranca: What is an example of a contract?

Military clothing manufacturing, which generally falls to disabled workers

For more information, visit the following link: <https://nfb.org/washington-seminar>

A general training session will be held in the Capitol Ball Room on Monday, January 28, from 2 to 4 PM.

Justin Salisbury: Closing