Your Weekly Legislative Updates & Action Alerts

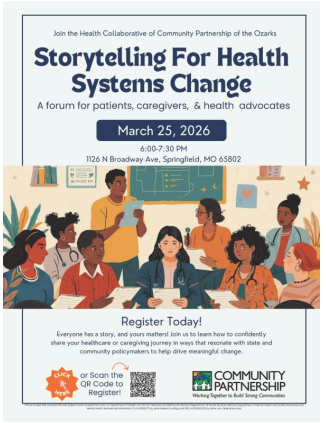
The Legislative Organizing Opportunities Project (LOOP) is an update designed to keep our community informed about key policy issues, upcoming events, and ways to take action. empower: abilities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Information is provided for educational and advocacy purposes only.

Help Us Reach 500 in Our Facebook Group!

We are just a few members away from 500 in our Facebook group, Empower Access! Please invite friends, family, clients, or anyone who wants to learn about independent living. Every invite helps!

Updates This Month

Storytelling for Systems Change Forum



When: March 25, 2026 • 6:00–7:30 PMWhere: 1126 N Broadway Ave, Springfield, MOHosted by: The Health Collaborative
This event is about **how stories can change systems**, especially in health care. You'll learn tools to speak up and advocate for changes in policy.
Panelists:

- Courtney Cox – PROMO
- Kayce Morton – CoxHealth
- Monica Horton – Springfield City Council

Register here (optional): Storytelling Forum Registration

empower: abilities Annual Meeting

You are invited to join us for the Empower: abilities Annual Meeting on Friday, March 13, from 8:00–10:00 a.m. at Empower: abilities (1450 W. Cambridge, Springfield).
This year's meeting will highlight both the impact of our services and where we are headed next. Over a continental breakfast, we will share:

- The measurable impact of our services across our region

- Details about our upcoming move and expanded vision for growth
- A preview of our new driving simulator supporting youth and adults with disabilities
- Key milestones from the past year and priorities for the year ahead

This gathering is an opportunity to connect with community members, advocates, and leaders who care about advancing access, independence, and opportunity for people with disabilities in our region.

Please RSVP by March 10 to michele@empowerabilities.org or call 417-886-1188 x222.
We hope you are able to join us.

Virtual Legislative Training – LEP Webinar

When: Thursday, March 26 • 1:00–2:30 PM
Learn how the legislature works, how to talk to lawmakers, and about current disability bills.

Register: Legislative Education Project
Please register at least two weeks in advance if you need accommodations.

You can also sign up for **GCD Legislative Updates** on the Missouri Disability Portal.
You can also sign up for GCD Legislative Updates here. State of Missouri Disability Portal

Missouri Council on Aging Legislative Calls

Every other Friday • 11:00 AM–12:00 PM
Join these calls to talk about issues affecting older adults and people with disabilities.
Register: Zoom Registration

What's Happening at the Capitol (Federal and State)

Federal Level

HR 1 Update

H.R. 1 became federal law in 2025. Some parts are already in effect, and other parts will start later as government agencies make rules.

The law affects Medicaid, food assistance (SNAP), student loans, and taxes. Even though it isn't just a disability law, it can affect people with disabilities because it changes programs many rely on.
Advocates are watching closely to see how the changes are put into action.

Federal Funding for Centers for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) get most of their funding from the federal government to help people with disabilities live independently. Current funding is in place, but future funding depends on Congress passing the FY 2026 budget. Advocates are working to protect and increase these funds so CILs can continue serving their communities.

📍 Did you know every county in Missouri is served by a CIL?

Find all 21 Centers here: MOCIL – Missouri Centers for Independent Living Home - MOCIL | Missouri Centers for Independent Living

Webinar: How H.R. 1 Affects People with Disabilities

The **ACL Grassroots Project** helps disability leaders and community members connect, learn, and build skills to improve policies and supports for people with disabilities.
In this **one-hour webinar**, you will:

- Get an easy-to-understand overview of **H.R. 1**
- Learn what the law means for people with disabilities
- Hear how it might affect **local programs and services** in your state

Register here: Webinar Link

Section 504 Update

Section 504 is a law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination in schools, hospitals, and other programs that get federal money.

Some states, including Missouri, are suing the federal government about new rules added in 2024. These rules make protections stronger and help people get services in the community instead of institutions.

The law has **not changed yet**, and nothing has been removed. Advocates are watching closely because the outcome could affect the rights of people with disabilities in many areas of life.

Missouri Legislative News

Bills to Watch

- **HB2034 – Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Mobility Equipment**
  Health insurance must cover necessary prosthetics, wheelchairs, repairs, and replacements.
- **HB2355 – Food Is Medicine Act**
  Missouri could provide medically tailored food for Medicaid participants to improve health.
- **HB2408 – Deaf-Blind Services Funding**
  Removes the $300,000 cap on grants for deaf-blind services.
- **HB3467 – Developmental Disability Board Funding**
  Changes local taxes that fund services for people with developmental disabilities.
- **HJR154 & SJR103 – Medicaid Work Requirements**
  These proposals could require some Medicaid participants to work or do community activities. Disability advocates are watching closely.

Insert bill number at this site to follow and learn more:
https://house.mo.gov/LegislationSP.aspx?year=2026&code=R

Budget & Revenue Concerns

Some people are worried about possible state budget cuts. Right now, Self-Directed Services (SDS) discussions do not affect Consumer Directed Services (CDS).

If your services help you live independently, work, or stay safe at home, consider **telling your legislator why these services matter**: Find your legislator.

Tax Proposal Update

Missouri is considering eliminating the income tax and replacing it with a sales tax. This could:

- Increase taxes for most Missourians
- Reduce money for schools and local services

Do you have something you are watching that you want to share with us?
Email Afton at aftonh@empowerabilities.org

What's Happening in Southwest Missouri

Springfield City Council

Meets every other Monday. Next meeting: March 9.
Agenda & materials: Springfield City Council
Watch online: City website or Facebook page

Get Involved! Serve on a Board or Commission

Want to help make Springfield more accessible and inclusive? There are openings on local boards and commissions for people with disabilities, seniors, and veterans. Learn more: Springfield Boards & Commissions

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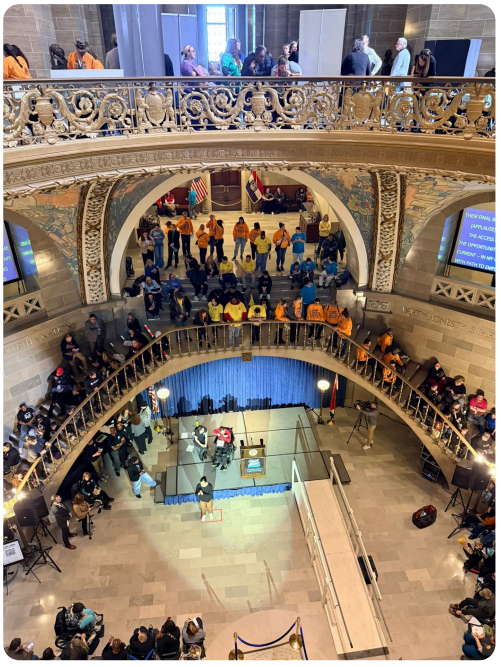
Recent Impact



We had a great time at Disability Rights Legislative Day!Check out media coverage:

- KRCG TV
- KCTV5
- Columbia Missourian
- ABC17 News

Watch this year's event on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/live/d8zDYAxWjnY

Be Heard and Take Action

Your voice matters! Make sure you're ready for upcoming elections. Here are some quick resources to help you get started:

- **Register to Vote**: https://vote.gov/register
- **Check your voter registration**: https://www.nass.org/can-I-vote/voter-registration-status
- **Learn about accessible voting**: https://www.eac.gov/voter_resources/resources_for_voters_with_disabilities.aspx
- **Don't know your elected officials?** Find out using your registered mailing address: https://house.mo.gov/default.aspx

- **Sign up for weekly policy updates with the Governor's Council on Disability**: https://stateofmissouri.wufoo.com/forms/qll7u7q0xfkhn3/

if you need help registering to vote or accessing your polling place, feel free to reach out. We are happy to help.

Questions?

If you have any questions about any of the key issues mentioned, or need assistance getting involved, please feel free to contact me. Keep following us on Facebook or our website calendar for more detailed information.

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