

# COMMUNICABILITY



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR DISABILITY COMMUNITY

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"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's way."

~ Victor Frank ~

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**New Horizons Un-Limited Inc. (NHU)** is a non-profit organization based in Milwaukee with a mission to make information and life experiences more accessible to people with lifelong disabilities, their families and caregivers. To learn more about our mission and activities, please visit the NHU website at [www.new-horizons.org](http://www.new-horizons.org).

## The Story on Midterm Elections

*Excerpted from an article By Frank G. Bowe, Ph.D., LL.D., Dr. Mervin Livingston Schloss Distinguished Professor, Hofstra University - [http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/frank\\_g\\_bowe](http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/frank_g_bowe)*

In this year's mid-term election voters will be deciding on all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 33 seats in the U.S. Senate, and scores of other offices, including state governors. With the general election right around the corner, participation is urgent.

This year, more than most, change is in the air. There is a strong and growing hunger to "return home" in the country. One signal: political newcomer Ned Lamont's upset victory over three-term U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman in Connecticut's August 8 primary. Lamont ran on one platform: end the war in Iraq. Another signal: polls showing that only 25% of Americans think the country is headed in the right direction. A third: voters increasingly identify economic issues, such as gas prices, health care costs, pension worries, the ballooning federal debt, and the like, as most likely to influence how they vote.

For Americans with disabilities, this rising tide holds much promise. We need to seize the day to push our agenda. And what is that agenda? Different people will advance different views. For me, it is a refocusing of policy and resources on long-neglected domestic issues. The country's response to last year's Katrina and Rita storms is illustrative. In both instances, the effort clearly has fallen short of meeting the need. Meanwhile, health care costs are soaring.

Furthermore, most American adults with disabilities, a distressing 70% plus, remain out of the labor force, 16 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Although a simplistic view holds that Democrats favor government support for human and civil rights and for support programs for those who are most vulnerable, while Republicans champion tax cuts and breaks for business, we cannot fall into that partisan trap. The fact is that our friends, both incumbents and challengers, are found in both parties. Some, too, are Independents (Lieberman the newest of them). We need to look beyond partisan labels to identify candidates who share our concerns, particularly those who really listen when we talk about our priorities and needs. Every candidate for Congress took note of Lieberman's defeat. Those supporting the war feel vulnerable. Some are softening their rhetoric and listening, as seldom before, to constituent worries about domestic issues. Candidates opposing further hostilities in the Middle East feel emboldened. Many are reaching out to seniors, persons with disabilities, and others who need public health insurance to talk about Medicare Part D and other "kitchen table" issues.

## The Big Picture

The **U.S. House of Representatives** has had a Republican majority for 12 years. At present, there are 232 Republicans and 202 Democrats, with 1 independent. A net change of 15 or more seats in November would switch control to Democrats. Of the 435 seats, most are not competitive.

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Analysts believe that about 192 seats are "safe Republican" and another 189 are "safe Democratic".

Accordingly, **to be "heard," disability activists need to focus upon competitive races.** As of mid-August, experts view 13 seats as "leaning Democratic," 27 as "leaning Republican," and just 14 as "toss up". The most competitive Congressional Districts, meaning the ones in which candidates are most receptive to voters' needs and desires, are: Arizona's 8th, Colorado's 7th, Connecticut's 2nd and 4th, Indiana's 2nd, Iowa's 1st, New Mexico's 1st, New York's 24th, Ohio's 6th and 18th, Pennsylvania's 6th, and Washington's 8th.

In the **U.S. Senate**, there are contests in 33 states. In those, Democrats are trying to hold 18 seats and Republicans 15. Analysts consider 12 to be "safe Democratic" and another 7 to be "leaning Democratic". The comparable figures for Republicans are 7 "safe" and 4 "leaning". Three are considered "toss ups" Missouri, Montana, and Rhode Island. For control of the Senate to change from Republican to Democratic, there must be a net pick-up for Democrats of six or seven seats. That is possible, but nowhere nearly as likely as is change in the House. Advocates are most likely to "be heard" in states having competitive races. In alphabetical order, these are, as of mid-August: Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington (in addition to the "toss up" states of Missouri, Montana, and Rhode Island). The Post's Cillizza thinks that Democrats have a shot in five races (Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) and a good chance in three more (Arizona, Tennessee, and Virginia). If you live in one of these Congressional Districts and/or in one of these States, you are particularly well situated to make a difference this year. **What to do?**

**First, research the candidates.** Which are most in tune with our priorities and needs? Which respond most effectively when presented with disability-related facts and figures?

**Second, volunteer.** These competitive campaigns are incredibly expensive. The candidates will welcome your help!

**Third, use TV, radio, newspapers and the Web to track political events and activities.** Show up, be visible, and ask questions.

**Fourth, energize your family, friends and neighbors.** Your mantra: "This is a change election. Get involved! "

**Fifth, write opinion pieces for your local paper.** Talk about local disability issues.

To keep up with the ever-changing electoral landscape over the next month, I suggest visiting Campaign 2006: Key Senate, House and Governor Races, offered by the Washington Post: <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/elections/keyraces/map>

## National and International News

### ***UN finalizes new treaty protecting rights of persons with disabilities***

*This article includes excerpts from an August 27<sup>th</sup> article published on the United Nations website.*

This August, after five years of negotiations, member countries of the United Nations have agreed on a new international treaty to protect the rights of persons with disabilities throughout the world. Delegates from more than 100 countries worked with hundreds of representatives from non-governmental disability organizations in drafting the treaty. The message of the treaty, according to UN General Assembly President Jan Eliasson is that "we want to have a life with dignity for all and that all human beings are all equal."

It is no secret that in many countries, including here in the United States, people with disabilities continue to be treated as inferior, as incapable of leading full, productive lives. This mentality has bred insurmountable barriers that continue to limit those with disabilities. Proponents of the convention maintained that the treaty was necessary because persons with disabilities represented one of the most marginalized groups and that their rights had been routinely ignored or denied throughout much of the world.

While the convention does not create new rights, it specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including civil rights, access to justice and the right to education, health services and access to transportation. The convention was largely approved by consensus.

The convention will be formally sent to the General Assembly for adoption at its next session, which begins in September. It will then be open for signing and ratification by all countries.

To review the Draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities visit the UN website at [www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc8adart.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc8adart.htm).

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## ***Money Follows the Person deadline fast approaching***

This summer, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the 2007 Money Follows the Person demonstration grants to states. There will be \$250 million available beginning January 1, 2007 and a total \$1.75 billion over five years for states to offer greater choice in long term care. That's \$1.75 billion that will ensure that you and/or your loved ones will receive care in the home, and not be huddled into nursing homes.

Has your state applied for federal Money Follows the Person funds? States have until November 1, 2006 to submit applications for these additional federal funds. If your state officials have yet to grasp the urgency of this movement, they need only review the personal, if not heart-wrenching, testimony from the just-released transcript of the National Hearing on Ending Institutional Bias in Long-Term Services and Supports. During the March 2006 hearing, 70 people shared their experiences of "living" in a nursing home. As one previous nursing home resident put it, "the prevailing atmosphere in nursing homes is that we now own you. You become a non-person. Your rights, human rights, and civil rights are routinely violated...there was no dignity." Encourage your state officials to review the transcript.

The full hearing transcript can be found online at [www.adapt.org/freeourpeople/aar/nash06/transcript.htm](http://www.adapt.org/freeourpeople/aar/nash06/transcript.htm).

While the full CMS Program Announcement is available at [www.cms.hhs.gov/NewFreedomInitiative/downloads/MFP\\_2007\\_Announcement.pdf](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NewFreedomInitiative/downloads/MFP_2007_Announcement.pdf)

## **Wisconsin News**

### ***Ground breaks for Wisconsin's 6th fully accessible cabin - plans for 7<sup>th</sup> underway***

New Horizons Un-Limited, in collaboration with Miller Engineering, Strass-Maguire and Associates, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Friends of Kohler-Andrae State Parks, has completed plans for Wisconsin's 6<sup>th</sup> fully accessible cabin for people with disabilities at Kohler Andrae State Park near Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Preliminary construction is already underway.

Kohler-Andrae State Park "is one of the last natural preserves along the Lake Michigan shore and is the home of majestic sand dunes, miles of golden beach, shimmering blue water, whispering pines, an

abundance of wildlife, and recreational activities for everyone." The park, which already features a specially designed campsite, rest room and shower facility for campers with physical disabilities, is an ideal location for an accessible cabin.

The Kohler Andrae Accessible Cabin can still benefit from your support. To find out how you can make this cabin a reality, please contact Fran Grandlic, President of Friends of Kohler-Andrae State Park at (920) 451-4080.

With the 6<sup>th</sup> cabin just breaking ground, plans for the 7<sup>th</sup> are already underway for the Richard Bong Recreation Area near Burlington, Wisconsin. New Horizons Un-Limited, Miller Engineering and Strass-Maguire and Associates have been invited to once again collaborate on the design.

This new cabin will be built on the Sunset Campground of the Recreation Area, located forty-one miles southwest of Milwaukee in Kenosha County. The Bong State Recreation Area, although "located in the most populated part of Wisconsin feels like you are out in the middle of no-where." It encompasses 4,515 acres of rolling grassland, savanna, wetlands and scattered woodland, is open year-round and has more than 40 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and dirt bike riding. Unlike a state park or forest, the recreation area also offers a range of additional outdoor activities. Visitors may fly model airplanes, hang glide, and launch hot air balloons.

With such accessible features as an urban fishing pond, three hunting blinds, an observation platform at the wildlife refuge, and accessible campsites, picnic tables, buildings and shelters, the Bong Recreation Area is an ideal location for an accessible cabin.

Plans for the accessible cabin will feature numerous accessible amenities, ensuring that all people with disabilities can freely use the cabin and the park's amenities without fear of hidden barriers. Features will include a fully accessible bathroom and kitchen and an accessible sleeping porch. All rooms will be large enough to allow for people in wheelchairs to move freely about the cabin from the entrance ramps, doorways, under-counter space and the roll-in shower. Furthermore, all fixtures and controls will be accessible, including the faucets, toilet, door and cabinet handles and light switches.

This cabin is in the stage of raising funds and donors and is seeking your support. To learn more about this project and how you can contribute, visit the Westosha Kiwanis Cabin for Disabled website [www.kcabin.org](http://www.kcabin.org).

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## Wisconsin Midterm Elections

There are a number of races this election season in Wisconsin, including both congressional races in the Senate and House of Representatives as well as state races including Governor, Lt. Governor, State Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Senate and Assembly.

Your opportunity to make your voice heard is now! Are you up to par on the legislative issues affecting you? Are you aware of each candidate's priorities and stance on issues that will affect you and your community? If not, it's time to get going on your research!

To learn more about the candidates of this year's general election, visit Wisconsin Vote on-line at [www.wisconsinvote.org](http://www.wisconsinvote.org). This site offers candidate bios along with articles that outline each candidate's stance on hot button issues.

To learn more about the legislative issues that can affect you as a citizen with a disability, visit DAWN online at [www.dawninfo.org](http://www.dawninfo.org). Contact each candidate's campaign to learn how each plans to address the issues most important to you.

If you do not have Internet access in your home, visit your local library.

Wisconsin's general election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 7, 2006. If you are a US citizen and at least 18 years of age, it is your responsibility, as a contributing citizen to vote and participate in the democratic process of our country.

To learn more about voter registration, absentee ballots, polling place locations and their accommodations for people with disabilities, visit the Wisconsin State Elections Board website at <http://elections.state.wi.us>. You may also contact the board by calling 866-VOTEWIS (866-868-3947).

The Elections Board also encourages comments and suggestions from you on how to best assist voters with disabilities. Contact the board at the number provided above with your suggestions.



### Listen In!

#### Disability Nation Podcast

Disability Nation is an Internet based audio magazine/podcast by and for people with disabilities. The Disability Nation podcast is available free of charge and is published every two weeks with the goal of educating and informing the public about disability issues. Past podcasts have discussed accessibility, mental health and market research, and disability profiling.

A podcast is an audio file in MP3 format that can be subscribed to and is automatically delivered to your computer. (You don't need an iPod to listen to podcasts. Any MP3 player that you normally use will play podcasts. Additionally, you can listen on your computer by using software such as Windows Media Player, RealPlayer, and iTunes.)

Visit [www.disabilitynation.net](http://www.disabilitynation.net).