

TASK FORCE TALK

Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day

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As the newest Chair of the Task Force on People with Disabilities, I was pleased to sponsor our 37th annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day (LDAD) on Monday, May 22, 2017 in Albany.

I would like to thank all the participants, including the 43 exhibitors and organizations serving people with disabilities that staffed informative tables throughout the day and the assembly staff and all those involved who helped make the day such a success.

We honored Mr. Glenn Liebman, CEO of the Mental Health Association in New York state, with the thirteenth annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. Advocacy Award. In addition we hosted two seminars, presented 18 elementary school children with awards for their winning entries to our annual poster contest and passed a package of key legislation crafted with a great deal of input from disability advocates.

Some of the bills that we passed include measures addressing disability rights and emergency preparedness.

- A.2546 (Lifton) – This bill would waive the state’s sovereign immunity with regard to application of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 as they apply to the protection of state employees.

- A.7283 (Dilan) – This bill would clarify that reasonable accommodation to enable a person with a disability to use and enjoy a dwelling includes the use of an animal to alleviate the symptoms or effects of a disability.

- A.4961-B (Weprin) – This bill would enable blind and visually impaired registered voters to request and receive Braille or large-print absentee ballots for elections administered under the election law and education law, providing them the opportunity to cast their vote independently.

- A.6287 (Barrett) – This bill would require every high-rise building owner to establish and maintain an emergency evacuation plan for disabled occupants and visitors. Additionally, this bill would require the owners of such buildings to maintain and update the emergency evacuation plan for persons with disabilities as necessary and ensure that such plan is readily available to emergency personnel.

- A.6865 (Weprin) – This bill would aid localities in preparing for and responding to disasters by requiring counties with local emergency management plans to maintain a confidential registry of people of all ages with disabilities who may require evacuation assistance and shelter during a disaster. People would be provided with the option to be included in the registry.

I’m very proud of the legislative package that we passed. In my next column, I’ll expand on the other pieces of legislation that made up the LDAD legislative package.

If you have any questions or concerns on the measures passed on Disabilities Awareness Day, please contact the Task Force office at 518 455-4592.