

UNITED SPINAL_{NOW}

Regardless of Who's Elected

BY JAMES WEISMAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



In a short time we will know who's been elected, if there's a new Supreme Court Justice, if Obamacare is likely to live or die, if there will be a national plan to combat COVID or more of the same, and if another COVID relief stimulus package, including state and local governments, is likely to pass.

Since the future of the country will soon be clearer than at the time I'm writing, let's consider things we need, no matter who is elected.

We need faith in government. Without it, we are at sea. We need to feel good about government, for so many reasons:

If citizens have contempt for government, or don't care about it, it will not attract the best and the brightest. Future Dr. Faucis will be less inclined to serve our country, because we've come to disrespect those who dedicate their lives to public service.

When we need to believe government, we won't, at least not *en masse*. Enemies, corporate giants, media moguls and conspiracy theorists will fill the void.

Our volunteer Armed Forces will be threatened by citizen apathy or distrust of government objectives. Would you risk your life to serve your country if you felt ambiguously about its military goals or didn't trust its leadership?

Assuming we can trust government, do we agree upon basic disability-related objectives?

The future, regardless of who is elected, will include people with disabilities. If the Affordable Care Act is maintained, pre-existing conditions will not prevent people with disabilities from leaving the Medicaid system and converting to employer-sponsored health plans, i.e. they will be able to work without fear of losing coverage for illnesses related to their disabilities.

We require a solution to the problem created by Medicaid homecare services, i.e. there are little-to-no services and supports for those needing homecare who are working. Extended life expectancies, improved therapies and access to enhanced transportation, communication and information technologies for people with disabilities make it possible to stay in the labor force after onset of disability.

Generally-available community-based services and supports for working people with disabilities are a must. The future will demand that a source of funding be created to keep people with disabilities in the labor force and not used exclusively to pay them not to work. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) dollars could be tapped for support/chore services and personal care services to keep people in the labor force, so they can be productive and pay taxes.

All new technologies, buildings and public transportation vehicles, INCLUDING AIRPLANES, must be accessible. It's 2020 and that should be the design standard. End of discussion. Inaccessible technologies and services, buildings and vehicles perpetuate discrimination. Employment options are limited by inaccessibility.

Government can solve problems. When we elect those committed to solving problems, they appoint talented people, whose only agenda is to meet needs. Public service is noble and should be treated as such. The commitment to analyzing problems and developing solutions that serve people with disabilities and the communities in which they live should be acknowledged and respected.

Social workers, lawyers, teachers, rehabilitation and medical professionals, health planners, community living specialists, transportation providers, vocational rehabilitation professionals and benefits specialists have toiled in government service for generations, knowing that their work was worthwhile. Their passion has served our community well, but will be lost if we consider service to others for suckers only. The future demands better.