



## *Governor's Office of Disability Affairs*

*H. Brandon Burris*  
*Executive Director*

### DD Council Report

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs continues attempts to make positive strides in today's extremely difficult economic environment. As a result of the current fiscal condition of the state we are forced to restructure our staff and permanently remove one full time administrative position. Our agency is currently operating with a full time staff of three. We have received encouraging language from the administration that we will soon be able to fill the open position of Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will have four main objectives: (1) In depth Constituent Services (2) Coordinate Youth Leadership Forum (3) Interface with Mayor's Advisory Councils (4) Oversee Annual GOLD Awards event. My goal is to use the restructuring process as an opportunity to place more emphasis on constituent assistance and disability community involvement. Our current staff is dedicated, hard working, and all less than a year into their job.

Governor Jindal unveiled his proposed FY 2009-2010 Executive Budget on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Overall, the FY 10 Executive Budget proposes total funding of \$26.719 billion, a decrease of \$2.891 billion, or 9.8 percent, compared to the FY 09 Total Budget of \$29.611 billion. In addition to streamlining many government functions, the Executive Budget builds on the administration's commitment to controlling the size of government by eliminating more than 1,400 fulltime positions. Recently, much discussion has centered on the federal stimulus legislation passed by Congress and how it may help the state fill the gap created by our revenue shortfall. It's very important to point out, first and foremost, that federal stimulus dollars are not permanent. Indeed, they are temporary funds that the state can use as we transition government to a more sustainable size. Just like any family or business living within its means, a tighter budget for state government represents not just a challenge to live within our means, but an opportunity to think strategically, prioritize what is essential, and plan ahead by pursuing reforms and innovations that will strengthen our state for years to come. In accordance with proposed HB01 GODA's main Performance Indicator for FY 10 is as follows:

"Number of training sessions held for state agencies which represent advocacy groups correlating to the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs goals and initiatives" Total Number 30

Under the proposed Executive Budget the Department of Education will relocate the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired (LSVI) from its current location in downtown Baton Rouge to the campus of the Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) on Brightside Drive. The Department of Education can achieve a net recurring savings of \$4,673,569 and a net savings of \$4,048,569 for fiscal year 2010 from this move. An analysis by the Department of Education indicates that the relocation of LSVI to LSD is not only a sound and feasible option for cost savings, but it can be accomplished without compromising the integrity of either school. By housing the two schools on the same campus, common functions and costs such as security, human resources, maintenance and some administrative oversight can be shared and distributed between LSVI and LSD – thereby focusing resources on programs and services that raise student achievement.



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The Governor's Advisory Council has been extremely active since Donna Breaux's appointment as Chair in November of 2008. The Council is averaging over 90% attendance since Governor Jindal started his term at the beginning of 2008. Our four main committees are holding regularly monthly meetings. The Council has decided to postpone proposed legislation involving teaching disability awareness in schools until next year's sessions (2010). The reason for the postponement is to develop a consensus on the language of the bill in regards to "suggesting" or "mandating" the education of disability awareness. It is my personal goal to ensure the education bill will be an essential requirement, and the committee feels that we should use the upcoming year to promote the bill and work collaboratively with the Department of Education. We have an upcoming GACDA meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The main agenda items are as follows: revision of by-laws, committee reports, installing future meeting procedures, and a newly added opportunity for public comment. With the upcoming Legislation Session approaching one of the key items will be the report from Representative Scott Simon and pending legislation that affects the disability community.

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs has been increasing their involvement with advocacy organizations across the state. We have experienced a shift from meetings of introductions to meetings of involvement and assistance, much to our pleasure. Advocacy groups and constituents are beginning to rely on GODA for assistance and I am extremely pleased with the support the staff has been able to offer. We have worked extremely close with the Louisiana Chapter of the MS Society to host a rally at the Capitol. Governor Jindal issued a proclamation declaring March 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> as MS Awareness week. We also worked with individuals at the Louisiana School for the Blind to have March 26<sup>th</sup> declared Braille Readers are Leaders Day in the state as well. In preparation of the upcoming hurricane season we are actively participating with emergency preparedness with DSS and ESF-6 functions.

If we can ever be of any assistance to the DD Council, or any of its members, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

H. Brandon Burris

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