

Virginia Rehabilitation Association

Legislative Priorities 2008

Funding to Serve Virginians with Disabilities on the Department of Rehabilitative Services' Waiting List (1.21 million for the biennium)

House Patron: Delegate Morgan 331#2h
Co-Patron: Delegate O'Bannon

Senate Patron: Senator Whipple 331#2s
Co-Patrons: Senators Houck, Hanger, Puller,
Watkins, and Reynolds

The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) administers the public vocational rehabilitation (VR) program in Virginia, which traces its origin to serving disabled veterans of World War I. This federal/state partnership provides services to eligible Virginians with disabilities to help them *prepare for, find, and maintain employment*. Today, 62% of all Virginians with disabilities are unemployed versus 3% for the population as a whole. For those with a significant disability, the percent rises to 74 %. For an African American with a significant disability, the percent goes even higher to 85.

Under federal law, public VR agencies must implement an order of selection that requires serving individuals with the most significant disabilities first before serving other eligible individuals when funding is insufficient to serve all eligible individuals. DRS has been under an order of selection since July 1, 2004. Today, the situation is so critical DRS is only serving one of four categories of eligible people – those with the most severe disabilities.

Being under an order of selection necessitates a “waiting list” of eligible individuals who could otherwise be served and assisted with returning *to work or entering the workforce for the first time*.

The purpose of this amendment is to provide funding (\$605K each year of the biennium) for 950 Virginians with disabilities that are projected by DRS to be on the waiting list June 30, 2008 so they can benefit from VR services and become *employed*.

Restore Funding For Long-term Employment Support Services (\$264,245 current SFY and \$264,245 each year of the biennium)

House Patron: Delegate Morgan
Current year restoration 455.3#3h
Restoration for biennium 331#6h

Senate Patron: Senator Marsh
Current year restoration 327#2s
Restoration for biennium 331#6s

These budget amendments restore a 3% cut, \$264,245, for the current fiscal year and each year of the biennium to the Long-term Employment Support Services (LTESS) program, an employment program that helps people with severe disabilities obtain and maintain *employment*. The reduction in funding to DRS represents an actual elimination of services to approximately 100 individuals currently receiving support to maintain their jobs. Seventy-seven (77) private providers provide LTESS across Virginia.