



Capitol Insider



Week of October 19th, 2015

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The Arc's
Public Policy

Disability
Related Bills

Action Alert

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Major Events Last Week

Social Security - Social Security Administration Announces No Cost-of-Living Increases for 2016

Last week, the Social Security Administration (SSA) [announced](#) that there will be no cost-of-living increase for Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits in 2016. The Social Security Act provides for [annual increases](#) in Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI), Disability Insurance (DI), and SSI benefits based on inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Because the CPI-W decreased over the last year, there will be no increase in Social Security or SSI benefits in 2016. However, as noted in a [statement](#) by The Arc's Senior Executive Officer for Public Policy, Marty Ford, many beneficiaries will still face increases in costs such as out-of-pocket medical expenses and housing. SSA also announced that two important thresholds for Social Security and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities [will increase in 2016](#): the Substantial Gainful Activity level for non-blind individuals will increase from \$1,090 per month in 2015 to \$1,130 per month in 2016, and the Trial Work Level will increase from \$780 per month in 2015 to \$810 per month in 2016. The Department of Health and Human Services has not yet announced Medicare premium changes for 2016. Because there is the "hold harmless" provision in Medicare Part B, premiums for about 70 percent of beneficiaries will not increase for OASI or DI beneficiaries. Medicare Part B beneficiaries who are not held harmless (generally higher income beneficiaries and those newly enrolled) may face premium increases of up to 52 percent.

Tax Policy/ABLE Act - Department of Treasury and Internal Revenue Service Hold Hearing on Qualified ABLE Programs Notice of Proposed Rule making

Last week, the Department of Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) held a public hearing on the proposed rules for implementation of the Stephen Beck, Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014. Speakers included Marty Ford of The Arc, representatives of other major disability advocacy organizations, and representatives of state treasurer's offices and college savings plan administrators. Speakers fielded questions from representatives of the Treasury Department and IRS. Most speakers stressed the need for a streamlined enrollment process and administrative

simplicity. The Department of Treasury and the IRS will now consider all written and oral comments and issue final regulations in the coming months.

Announcement

The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation Fellowship Program Accepting Applications - Deadline Looming

The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation is seeking applicants for its Public Policy Fellowship. Applicants should be exemplary professionals, people with disabilities, or family members of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The fellowship prepares mid-career or more seasoned leaders to assume leadership in the disability public policy arena at the state or national level. Fellows spend one year in Washington, D.C. in the office of a Member of Congress, Congressional Committee, or federal agency. Learn more and apply for the fellowship [here](#). Applications are due October 31, 2015.