

➤ *Tax Bill Moves Forward in Congress*

On November 16th, the U.S. House approved its version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on 227-205 vote. The Minnesota delegation voted along strict party lines; all Republicans voted for it, and all Democrats voted against it. The U.S. Senate Finance Committee approved its version soon along party lines, and it hopes to bring the bill to the full Senate for a vote after the Thanksgiving recess.

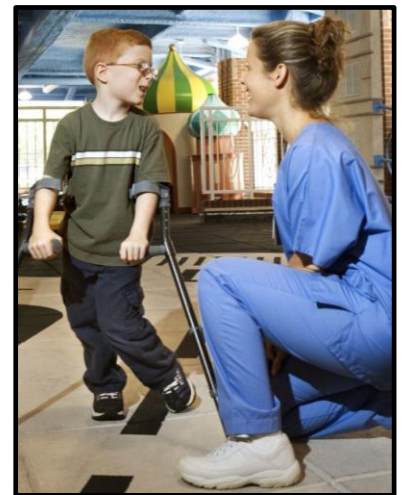


The Arc is very concerned about the impact of the House and Senate bills on people with disabilities and their families, and we oppose this legislation. A [non-partisan analysis of the tax bills](#) indicates that our concerns about the tax cuts bills are warranted. There are differences between the House and Senate versions, but both of them would increase the deficits dramatically, provide more benefits to those who are doing well financially compared with those who are struggling, and lay the foundation for large cuts to needed services like Medicaid (or Medical Assistance in Minnesota). In addition, The Arc has cited a number of sections in the House bill that take away tax benefits to people with disabilities who have high medical costs and to employers wanting to hire people with disabilities.

➤ *New Actions to Help Protect Medicaid*

On November 18th, we sent an alert to you, asking you to take two actions to help protect Medicaid. If you haven't done so already, please:

- 1) Call Senators Al Franken, Senator Amy Klobuchar, and your representative in the U.S. House. Give them this message: "I am concerned that the greatly reduced revenue from large tax cuts will mean big cuts to Medicaid later. Please keep the promise of Medicaid, and protect the program from being used to pay for tax cuts in the Tax Cuts and Job Act."
 - Senator Franken's phone: 202-224-5641 (Washington, D.C.); 651-221-1016 (local)
 - Senator Klobuchar's phone: 202-224-3244 (Washington, D.C.); 612-727-5220 (local)
 - To contact your member of the U.S. House: Call 202-225-3121, and ask to speak to your representative. If you don't know who your representative is, [click here](#).
- 2) Sign the [Pledge to Protect the Promise of Medicaid](#), sponsored by the This Is Medicaid coalition. Your petition will be delivered to your member of Congress.



Stay tuned for more actions you can take this week while Congress is on its Thanksgiving recess.

➤ *Join Us in St. Cloud: Medicaid Roundtable, Nov. 21st*

Our efforts to protect Medicaid (or MA) at the federal level must be complemented by activities here in this state to make MA work better for you and your family. The Arc Minnesota, The Arc Midstate, and the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance are hosting one of those activities. Join us for a Medical Assistance

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Roundtable on Tuesday, November 21 at the Whitney Senior Center, 1527 Northway Drive in St. Cloud, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

At this roundtable, you will get an update on MA, learn tips on how to share your story with legislators, and meet with local policymakers to discuss solutions for making MA work better for you and your family members. The Arc Midstate has created [an event page on Facebook](#); please share with your networks. The event is free, and we will provide refreshments. [E-mail](#) me if you have questions or want to RSVP.

➤ *Advocates Connect With Legislators at Red Wing Forum*

On November 14th, I joined staff from The Arc Southeastern Minnesota for a legislative forum in Red Wing, featuring Senator Mike Goggin (Senate District 21), Representative Barb Haley (House District 21A), and Representative Steve Drazkowski (House District 21B). Nearly thirty people attended, during which the three state legislators addressed questions regarding the workforce shortage, threats to Medicaid, employment for individuals with disabilities, education, and transportation. Putting a unique spin on the traditional legislative forum, we invited several advocates -- Kate Smith of Cardinal, Gloria Salsa of ProAct, Karen Larson of the Region 10 Quality Council, and self-advocate Tom Taylor -- to share personal stories about the impact these issues have on their lives and the disability community as a whole. Many thanks to Beth Honecker and Karen Larson for their hard work in putting the event together!

➤ *Ellison Hosts Press Conference on Tax Proposal*

On November 13th, Minnesota's Fifth District Congressman Keith Ellison (photo) held a roundtable discussion with small business owners as well as representatives from nonprofit and advocacy organizations to discuss the prospective impact of federal tax proposals on his constituents. I volunteered to be a representative of both the disability community and the broader [This Is Medicaid coalition](#). I highlighted The Arc's concern about the significant increase to the deficit outlined in the tax bill, which could ultimately mean cuts to critical programs like Medicaid (i.e., Medical Assistance). Any threat to Medicaid is a threat to the independence and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, as the program provides critical services and supports in the community. Following the roundtable was a press conference, during which fellow This Is Medicaid member, Ellie Beaver from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, also spoke.



➤ *Contribution Limit for ABLE Accounts Increases*

The ABLE National Resource Center announced that the total annual contribution limit to an ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) account will rise from \$14,000 per tax year to \$15,000 per tax year, beginning in 2018. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [recently announced](#) several adjustments it made to the federal tax code; one of these adjustments increases the federal gift tax exclusion. A section of ABLE Act, passed in 2014, ties any adjustments the IRS makes in the federal gift tax exclusion to the annual contribution limit for ABLE accounts. The recent IRS action increases the gift tax exclusion for inflation, which means an increase in amount that that can be put in to an ABLE account each year.

➤ *Apply for Openings On CFSS Council*

The Arc Minnesota encourages people with disabilities and their family members to apply for openings on the Consumer First Services and Supports (CFSS) Implementation Council. CFSS is a proposed service that will replace Minnesota's personal care assistance (PCA) program, which helps people with disabilities with their daily activities at home and in the community. The openings are specifically for people who have experience with PCA and related services. If you or anyone you know would be a good fit for this council, please apply. There currently ten openings for people receiving PCA services or family members. To apply, go to: <https://commissionsandappointments.sos.state.mn.us/>