

# Policy Flash

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The latest news, views & information on policy issues for Virginia's DD Council members  
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## In Virginia. . .

### ***The ARC of Virginia Launches Pre-2005 General Assembly Campaign...***

noting that, "during the 2004 session of the Virginia General Assembly, Delegates and Senators showed their support for individuals with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities by approving \$50 million in new funding for community-based services. Most notably, 700 new slots were approved for the MR Waiver to drastically reduce the urgent care waiting list. This was the jump-start that Virginia's MR and DD service system needed, but there is still much to be done to ensure that more Virginians with developmental disabilities receive the services and supports needed to live, work, and play successfully in the community."

### ***Warner Administration to Create...***

a community development bank in Virginia. The bank will serve as a reliable source of financing for projects that address critical community needs but are unable to secure financing through traditional means. The bank will also provide gap financing to ensure that crucial projects are able to get started. The Governor and Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael J. Schewel are working with private and public organizations to identify options for the bank's initial capitalization.

### ***Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development....***

will grant \$350,000 to the Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority to make housing accessibility improvements for low-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities in Southwest Virginia.

### ***New Elderly or Disabled Waiver with Consumer Direction (EDCD) Waiver...***

has been approved by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to move forward in Virginia. Under this initiative, optimal components of the present Consumer Directed Personal Assistance (DCPAS) Waiver and the Elderly and Disabled (E&D) Waiver will be combined into one waiver (the EDCD Waiver) which, among other features, will include: choice for people who want to receive consumer-directed services; choice of types of care including all agency personal care, all consumer-directed personal care, or a combination of care; availability of respite care; access to personal emergency response system (PERS) services; access adult day care services; elimination of the 42 hour weekly cap on for individuals now receiving the CDPAS waiver; and, the patient pay requirements of the E&D Waiver will now be available to individuals on the EDCD Waiver. The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) hopes to begin implementing the EDCD Waiver in early 2005.

### ***Governor Warner Unveils New Budget...***

that emphasizes: making Virginia's tax system fairer; enabling the state to meet its commitment to education and other core services; and restoring the Commonwealth's fiscal integrity. Also included in the Governor's budget, which was released in a briefing to the Appropriations Committees on December 17<sup>th</sup>, are significant fiscal enhancements to improving the state's transportation systems. In the health and human resources arena,

the Governor noted that many states, including Virginia, are facing severe, long-term financial challenges related to skyrocketing Medicaid costs -- with Virginia's Medicaid program "one of the leanest in the nation." For the elderly and disabled, the Governor's budget recommended... "enhanced state oversight and reimbursement to improve care in assisted living facilities, additional funding for medications and crisis stabilization services for mentally ill persons, and funding to initiate community-based care for mentally retarded persons." In his budget, Governor Warner reiterated his commitment to continuing previously-initiated Olmstead-related activities and recommended "additional funding for housing, community transition, case management, independent living skills, and guardianship." The goal of these proposals is "to enable individuals with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their communities."

## In the Nation. . .



### ***Congress Resumed on November 16<sup>th</sup>....***

to begin organizing for the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress – including establishing Committee assignments and orientation for new Members. Congressional leaders are faced with the task of assigning committee funding and staff ratios, as well as with deciding on how large a majority of seats Republicans will occupy on each committee. Final Committee assignments will not occur until after the new Congress officially convenes in January 2005.

Nine of the thirteen appropriations bills for FY 2005 still are pending. It is expected that most of these bills will be rolled into one omnibus appropriations bill. The Senate adopted \$8 billion for additional discretionary domestic spending and it remains to be seen how much will survive the conference. There is still a chance that Congress will have to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to maintain current spending levels into 2005. Stay tuned for more information... (NACDD-LAW, Nov. 18, 2004)



### ***New Federal Law Promotes Access to Assistive Technology and Will impact Virginians with Disabilities. ...***

Under the auspices of the recently-passed and signed into law (October 25, 2004) Assistive Technology Act. "This new federal law will have significant impact on the lives of Virginians with disabilities, allowing us to expand on the AT programs and initiatives that our state has previously implemented and to continue to support to further the employability and independence of Virginians with disabilities," said Virginia Governor Mark Warner.

The Assistive Technology Act of 2004 extends a previous law that established Assistive Technology Act Programs across the United States. The Virginia Assistive Technology Service (VATS), administered by the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), directs assistive technology efforts for the state of Virginia.

The Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) was established in 1990 and funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The program's mission is to increase awareness of, and access to appropriate, affordable assistive and information technologies and services for Virginians of all ages and abilities. For more information, please visit [www.vats.org](http://www.vats.org).

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