

The Special Session Update

By: Ellen Pinnes and The Disability Coalition

The special session of the New Mexico Legislature is now in its fourth day. The bad news is that bills to address the state's budget shortfall by raising more revenue are not moving forward -- there's a slight chance that could change, but it's not likely. Ruling out increased revenues means balancing the budget has to be done through cuts in spending.

The good news is that the major bills introduced so far to reduce appropriations to state agencies would NOT cut Medicaid and specifically call for no cuts to the DD waiver. The legislative leadership has offered three possible plans (HB17, sponsored by Rep. Varela, and SB15 and SB16, sponsored by Sen. Smith) -- all three would keep Medicaid funding, and funding for the DD waiver specifically, at current levels.

A fourth bill introduced by the House minority leader, Rep. Tom Taylor, would simply call on the governor to reduce spending by the amount of the projected revenue shortfall and would give the governor complete control over how this was done. Rep. Taylor's bill is unlikely to be adopted by the Legislature.

I encourage you to call your senator and representative and ask them to vote for no cuts to Medicaid and to the DD waiver in particular. Legislators don't have secretaries during special sessions, but you can leave a message for any legislator by calling the Capitol switchboard at 505-986-4300. Many legislators do use e-mail -- you can find addresses on the legislative website at www.nmlegis.gov using the "Find Your Legislator" function under "Members" on the home page. The session may end as early as tomorrow (Wednesday) so call or e-mail soon!

Thanks for making the voice of the disability community heard!