



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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NEWS FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

by Claudia Browner

On January 13, 2025, state leaders, dignitaries, and members of the public gathered at the state capitol in Jefferson City to witness the inauguration of Governor Mike Kehoe as Missouri's 58th governor and to hear his inaugural speech. Alongside the new governor, the following elected officials took their oaths of office: Attorney General Andrew Bailey, State Treasurer Vivek Malek, Secretary of State Denny Hoskins, and Lieutenant Governor David Wasinger.



After the inauguration ceremony, a promenade of the Clydesdales escorted the new governor to the Governor's Mansion, where he greeted the public.

On January 28, Governor Kehoe delivered his first State of the State address, outlining his administration's priorities and budget recommendations. If you missed the address, you can watch the recording at <https://www.mo.gov/live> or read the transcript at <https://governor.mo.gov/press-releases/archive/securing-missouris-future-governor-kehoe-delivers-first-state-state-address>.

If you are planning a visit the capitol during the legislative session or at any other time of year, be sure to explore the newly opened [Hall of Governors](#), which features portraits and historical information about the leaders who have shaped Missouri's history and identity. This exhibit includes accessible elements, such as QR codes linking to websites with detailed information about each governor.

Before you plan a visit to the capitol, you may want to check out the [Capitol Access Guide](#) for information on accessibility features and accommodations within the building. The guide has recently been updated to include details about the accessibility features of the Hall of Governors, as well as an accessible restroom equipped with a Hoyer lift available on the basement level of the capitol building.



DISABILITY RELATED LEGISLATIVE NEWS

by Laura Mueth

The legislative session has begun. Over 250 bills impacting people with disabilities in some manner have already been introduced between the House of Representatives and the Senate. To stay updated on the progress of disability related bills in Missouri, you can sign up to receive the weekly [Legislative Update](#) newsletter.

[Senator Mike Moon](#) proposed a rule change for the Senate which would require the proceedings in the Senate Chamber to be livestreamed. This is something various disability organizations are happy to see being pursued because it would lead to increased accessibility for those with disabilities.

If you would like to advocate on this issue or one of the disability related bills, but are not sure where to start, you are invited to register for one of the remaining two [Legislative Education Project webinars](#) to learn how to discuss issues with legislators, among other topics. The upcoming webinar dates are February 27, 2025, at 7:00-8:30 PM and March 13, 2025, at 1:00-2:30 PM. Please complete the [LEP webinars registration form](#) to register.

You could also participate in [Disability Rights Legislative Day](#) on Wednesday, February 26 at the Capitol in Jefferson City to join people with disabilities and advocates from throughout the state in speaking to legislators. While specific topics will be the focus for the rally, you can use your time meeting with legislators to discuss any issues important to you.

There are TWO great leadership opportunities for self-advocates at DRLD!

Access Team: This group of leaders will receive extra-training for DRLD. They will be able to help others attending that day find their legislators and navigate the day. There will also be the potential for appointments with state officials.

Apply for the Access Team at <https://drlld.org/events/access-team/>

Rally Speakers: This is the heart and soul of DRLD. Hundreds of people gather in-person and online to create power and momentum for the day's advocacy. Speakers will get 2-3 minutes to speak and receive training and support from DRLD coalition members. The themes this year are **Access to Services, Employment and Transportation**.

Apply to be a Rally Speaker at <https://drlld.org/events/rally-speaker/>

Applications for both positions are due on **Tuesday, February 4th** at 5pm! Apply Today!

If you are unable to come to Jefferson City on February 26, you will be able to watch a live-stream of the rally in the Capitol Rotunda from 11:15-12:15pm.

You may also consider scheduling an appointment to meet with a legislator in your community during the legislative spring break from March 14 to March 21 when legislators are back in their districts instead of being in the Capitol.

More information about Disability Rights Legislative Day is available at drlld.org



APPLY NOW FOR THE 21ST MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis

Applications are still open for the 2025 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)! This unique, weeklong leadership experience will take place July 15–19, 2025, on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.



MO-YLF is designed to empower high school students with disabilities (ages 16–21) to become confident leaders and advocates in their communities. Each year, approximately 30 delegates from across Missouri come together to:

- Build Leadership Skills through workshops on self-advocacy, goal-setting, and self-determination.
- Explore Disability Rights and Culture with peers and mentors who share lived experiences.
- Experience Civic Engagement by participating in a mock legislative session and visiting the state Capitol.
- Connect with Community through social activities like a talent show, adaptive sports, and more.

MO-YLF provides a life-changing opportunity for young people to prepare for success in education, employment, and independent living—all in a supportive, inclusive environment. Thanks to our generous sponsors, the program is offered at no cost to delegates. Applications are due by March 31, 2025. For more details or to apply, visit www.disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.

MO-YLF IS OFFERING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

It takes a great team of dedicated volunteers and staff members to facilitate the MO-YLF! We are looking for individuals who can contribute to this empowering program and make a positive impact on the lives of young leaders with disabilities. Your role as a staff member or volunteer will involve guiding and supporting participants and creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere. We welcome MO-YLF alumni and other interested individuals (staff from independent living centers, disability organizations, college students, or teachers) to apply as staff to support, lead and mentor the delegates! This is a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young individuals with disabilities while growing professionally.

Apply now at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf/volunteer.htm>.

If you have any questions about the GCD's youth programs, please contact Reece Ellis at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600. Please help us share this exciting leadership training opportunity with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

by Reece Ellis

Are you interested in learning more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum?

Join us for an informational webinar

REGISTER NOW



February 6, 2025	5:00 - 6:00 PM
March 11, 2025	2:30 - 3:30 PM



Register at
tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars

The Governor's Council on Disability is offering two more free informational webinars for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF).

Each webinar will include detailed information on what takes place during MO-YLF, what the benefits are for a student to attend, and information on the application process.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend! Registration is required to attend.

The next webinar will be offered on Thursday, February 6, 2025, from 5:00-6:00 PM

Please complete the Webinar Registration Form at: <https://tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars>

BEYOND BLACK HISTORY MONTH: THE DISABILITY RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

Celebrating Black History Month and the Disability Rights Movement recognizes and acknowledges the efforts and sacrifices of countless activists and organizations that have fought for equal opportunities, social acceptance, and systemic change. This highlights the importance of inclusion and the necessity of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability or race, have the opportunity to participate fully in their communities. Although distinct in their focuses, the civil rights movement and the disability rights movement share a deep connection based on the universal pursuit of equality, dignity, and justice. These movements have challenged discriminatory practices and aimed for a more inclusive society for marginalized groups. Understanding their intersections provides valuable insights into how social movements can inspire and bolster one another and promote fundamental human rights.

The civil rights movement was a social and political movement in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. Its goals were to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. The movement sought to secure legal protection of citizenship rights as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and equal access to education, jobs, and public services through nonviolent protest and legal action. This was a pivotal period in history, marked by the struggle for racial equality and justice. Activists worked tirelessly to challenge segregation and advocate for the rights of African Americans. Key figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Thurgood Marshall emerged as passionate leaders. Black-owned restaurants, such as the Club from Nowhere and Paschal's, supplied food, meeting facilities for civil rights activities and donated to fundraising efforts. The unwavering commitment of these dedicated advocates exemplifies the enduring human spirit and highlights the transformative impact of collective action.



The achievement of landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 transformed the legal landscape and laid the groundwork for ongoing discussions about race and justice. In the wake of the civil rights movement, there was a growing recognition of the importance of celebrating black history and honoring the memory and sacrifices of dedicated advocates. This movement paved the way for the creation of Black History Month by raising national awareness of the need to celebrate African American history. What began as Negro History Week grew in popularity and culminated in Black History Month, a month-long national observance. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

Inspired by the civil rights movement, the disability rights movement emphasized accessibility, social inclusion, and the empowerment of persons with disabilities to take control over decisions affecting their own lives. Advocates for disability rights organized sit-ins, drawing attention to systemic discrimination and barriers faced by people with disabilities.

The Capitol Crawl was a pivotal event in the disability rights movement. Individuals with disabilities crawled up the steps of the U.S. Capitol on March 12, 1990, demonstrating the challenges faced by people with disabilities, particularly the inaccessibility of public spaces. The event received widespread media coverage, raised public awareness and support for disability rights, and is credited as the tipping point that led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990. The ADA promotes equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, and access to public spaces.

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Beyond Black History Month

(Continued from page 5)

At the intersection of race and disability are the unique experiences of individuals who navigate both racial and disability identities and their struggle against systemic barriers and discrimination. No one symbolizes the intersectional nature of race and disability more than Brad Lomax. Diagnosed as a teenager with multiple sclerosis and a wheelchair user, Lomax was a cross-sectional movement leader and advocate, combining the resources of the civil rights movement with the disability rights movement.

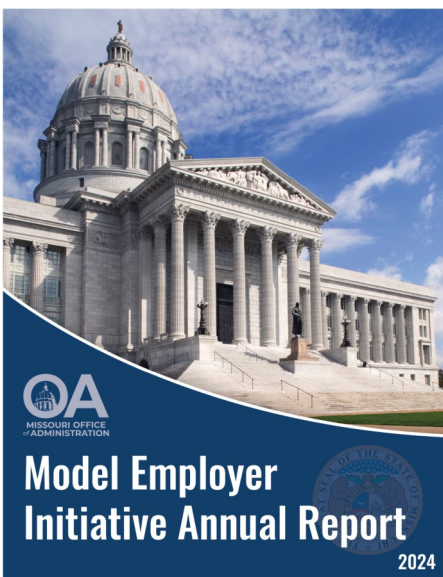
Brad Lomax and other civil rights activists answered the call to action to support disability protestors during the 504 Sit-in. On April 5, 1977, a group of individuals with disabilities conducted a sit-in protest at the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) building in San Francisco to advocate for accessibility and accommodations for people with disabilities. Organized by disability activists Judith Heumann, Kitty Cone, and Mary Jane Owen, this protest addressed the government's failure to enforce Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Spanning 25 days, the 504 Sit-in involved over 150 individuals who refused to leave, making it the longest sit-in at a federal building to date. The protesters endured hunger, cut phone lines, and no medicine or water. The protesters received support from a range of organizations and individuals, such as labor unions, religious groups, and civil rights organizations. Key supporters of the 504 protests included the Glide Memorial Church, Delancey Street, United Farm Workers, Black Panther Party, Gray Panthers, Salvation Army, and many others. This collaboration marks the 504 Sit-in as a significant milestone in cross-movement organizing.

Black history illuminates the struggle for civil rights and cultural recognition, while disability history advocates for accessibility and inclusion in society. By exploring these interconnected narratives, we better understand the challenges faced by people at the crossroads of race and disability and the contributions they have made and continue to make to society.

Black history is forever linked with disability history, as both are interconnected chapters in the broader social justice narrative. By understanding their links, we can appreciate the collective action and the enduring fight for a society where all individuals can thrive without prejudice or limitation.

2024 MODEL EMPLOYER INITIATIVE ANNUAL REPORT

by Claudia Browner



In 2019, former Governor Parson issued Executive Order 19-16 directing the State of Missouri to put forth best efforts to eliminate the disparity in the percentage of individuals with disabilities of working age in the population and the percentage of employees with disabilities in the State workforce and set annual goals for continuing to increase the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the State workforce.

Members of the Office of Administration's Division of Personnel, Office of Equal Opportunity, and the Governor's Council on Disability collaborate to assist executive agencies in carrying out the directives of EO19-16.

The [2024 Model Employer Initiative Annual Report](#) provides data and efforts taken by the executive branch to implement this initiative and Model Employer legislation, Section 37.980.1 RSMo.

More information about the Model Employer Initiative is available at <https://disability.mo.gov/model-employer.htm>

Missouri Governor’s Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor’s Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

STATE OF MISSOURI TALENT SHOWCASE

The upcoming State of Missouri’s Talent Showcase is thoughtfully tailored for job seekers with disabilities to proudly display their job readiness. Each job seeker will have their own designated table space, providing an excellent opportunity to highlight their experiences, skills, and abilities. It’s a fantastic chance to stand out and make a lasting impression!

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025
Time: 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: McClung Park Pavilion, 930 McClung Park Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65101



State of Missouri recruiters from various departments will circulate among booths and connect with job seekers whose skills and abilities align with their needs. Job seekers can participate in mock interviews and receive professional resume support. This event reflects our commitment to ensure all job seekers can successfully and effectively engage with recruiters at the State of Missouri. Secure a spot today as space is limited.

For registration or questions, please contact HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

February 23, 2025
[Disability Awareness Convention](#), hosted by The Arya Foundation, Chesterfield

February 26, 2025
[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#), Jefferson City

May 5—7, 2025
[Virtual ADA Symposium](#)

May 28—30, 2025
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference](#), Lake of the Ozarks

June 15—18, 2025
[National ADA Symposium](#), Atlanta, Georgia

July 15-19, 2025
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.

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