

**VOR Action Item Reminders**

\*[VOR AWARENESS MONTH - OCTOBER 2009](#): Please do your part. Help VOR grow!

\*Shop and benefit VOR! Visit <http://www.igive.com>, type in "Voice of the Retarded" and Shop!

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**VOR Weekly E-Mail Update**  
**September 18, 2009**  
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**Federal Update**

1. H.R. 1255: 64 and counting! Follow up is key

**State News**

2. New York: It's a mad, mad world (A look at the parallel to our advocacy: the impact of "integration" on the mentally ill) (Editorial)

**VOR and You**

3. Website Updates: Story submissions from members
4. VOR: 26 Years and Counting

**H.R. 1255 Cosponsors**  
**Membership and Donation Form**

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**FEDERAL UPDATE**

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**1. H.R. 1255: 64 and counting! Follow up is key**

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This past week, Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) was added as a cosponsor bringing the total number of cosponsors to 64 (see below).

If you made contact with your U.S. Representative in August, now is a great time for follow-up. Members of Congress and their staff are dealing with many, many issues. It is up to YOU to keep H.R. 1255 on the radar screen and at the top of the pile. Follow up weekly - be friendly, but persistent.

See, [www.vor.net/legislative-voice/legislation/hr1255](http://www.vor.net/legislative-voice/legislation/hr1255), for H.R. 1255 resources. See, <http://www.vor.net/legislative-voice/legislation/hr-1255-cosponsors-vor>, for a list of cosponsors.

**THANK YOU!!**

**STATE NEWS**

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**2. New York: It's a mad, mad world (A look at the parallel to our advocacy: the impact of "integration" on the mentally ill) (Editorial)**

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**By E. FULLER TORREY**

**September 13, 2009**  
**The New York Post**

**About the Author: Dr. E. Fuller Torrey is the founder of the Treatment Advocacy Center in Arlington, Va., and author of "The Insanity Offense."**

Federal Judge Nicholas Garaufis of Brooklyn issued a ruling this week that, although well-intentioned, will ultimately mean disaster for New Yorkers. In response to a lawsuit brought by Albany group Disability Advocates, the judge ruled that the state Office of Mental Health violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by warehousing over 4,000 mentally disabled people in 380 group homes around the state. These people must be released, said Judge Garaufis, to live "in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs."

We know what the "integrated setting" looks like, because we have seen this movie before. When the state Office of Mental Health deinstitutionalized more than 90,000 patients from the state mental hospitals, decreasing their numbers from 96,000 to fewer than 6,000 between 1955 and 2005, we saw a massive increase in untreated mentally ill individuals on the streets, in shelters and in prisons. Today, there is not a single county in the state in which the psychiatric ward of the local hospital has as many seriously mentally ill individuals as does the local jail. Rikers Island is de facto the largest mental institution in the state.

Judge Garaufis is correct that many of the group homes in which patients have been placed are snake pits, especially those around New York City. The fault for this lies with the Office of Mental Health, which failed to monitor these homes and close down those that fail to meet standards. Twenty years ago, the state had an active Commission on Quality Care for the Mentally Disabled that reported directly to the governor and made unannounced inspections of the group homes and hospitals. Today, the official state policy is to see no evil, speak no evil. Several key members of the state legislature also bear responsibility for this sordid state of affairs, having accepted large campaign contributions from the group home operators and then protecting them from regulation.

What Judge Garaufis should do, of course, is to order the state to clean up the group homes, limit their size, and set up a program of unannounced inspections by an independent state agency. Instead, he threw residents out on the streets. The vast majority of mentally ill individuals in group homes are moderately to severely disabled and are not able to live on their own. The idea that you can open the doors, wave goodbye, and have these individuals live happily ever after is a cruel myth. Most of them have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and severe depression and require medication to control their symptoms. At least in the group home they get medication. Living on their own, however, the majority of these individuals will not take medication, because they do not think they are sick. They will take it only if it is court-ordered and monitored.

And there's the rub! Disability Advocates, the patients' rights group that brought the suit against the state, works very hard to ensure that no individual has to take medication who does not wish to do so. This is done in the name of civil rights, but there is nothing either civil or right about leaving severely mentally ill individuals untreated and living on the street or in jail, where they are regularly victimized.

Treatment is the key, and most mentally ill people who are receiving treatment make excellent neighbors. New York state has, in fact, a fine program for ensuring that such individuals receive medication. It is called Kendra's Law, after Kendra Webdale, who was pushed to her death under

a subway by a man with untreated schizophrenia. A study of Kendra's Law by the state Office of Mental Health reported that, among mentally ill persons, it decreased homelessness from 19% to 5% and decreased those in jail from 23% to 3%. In an independent study just released by researchers at Duke University, Kendra's Law was reported to halve the rates of psychiatric hospitalization, arrest and suicide attempts. Despite such clear evidence of efficacy, Kendra's Law has been relatively little used because of opposition by Disability Advocates and similar groups. They repeatedly invoke the mantra of civil rights but fail to consider the civil rights of community residents who are forced to live with thousands of untreated mentally ill individuals on the streets and in parks, bus and train stations, libraries, and other public settings.

So what is likely to happen from Judge Garaufis' ruling? The state will close down the worst of the group homes and place the residents in situations where they will no longer receive medications. Many will then relapse, be rehospitalized, become homeless, and/or end up in jail.

A small percentage will, because of their untreated delusions, become violent, perpetuating New York's train of such tragedies. The state Office of Mental Health will disclaim responsibility but say it needs more money to fix the problem; in fact, it currently spends more money per capita than any other state mental health agency, \$184.32, when the mean for all states is only \$89.28. There is sufficient money for a model program except for lack of leadership in the Office of Mental Health, the legislature, and the governor's office.

There is one obvious solution to the problem. Take a random selection of mentally ill residents from the group homes; tell them they can take their antipsychotic medication or not, as they wish; and place them in housing immediately next door to Gov. Paterson, Commissioner Michael Hogan of the Office of Mental Health, Judge Garaufis, Executive Director Cliff Zucker of Disability Advocates, and each member of the state legislature who has accepted campaign contributions from group home operators. Let these officials experience the problems of having untreated individuals with severe mental illnesses living on their doorstep.

The problems of group homes and underuse of Kendra's Law would be solved faster than you can say "mental disability."

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**VOR and You**

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**3. Website Updates: Great Story Submissions from members**

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**Frank David's Story**

**By Linda Selman**

I am the mother of an autistic and mentally retarded son, Frank David Selman. At twenty-four, Frank David is one of the thousands of developmentally disabled adults living in this nation's Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICFs/MR). Although they make up only a small percentage of America's population, all their stories are important, but I can tell only one. Here is Frank David's. . . . ([Read More](#))

**John Henry's Story**

**By June Peach, Louisiana**

Our son has been successful because of a 10 year period he lived in a large facility and because he works daily in a large facility now while living at home. He is now 47. Here is his story. . . . .  
([Read More](#)).

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**4. VOR: 26 Years and Counting!**  
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**October is VOR Awareness Month!** Please help spread the word!  
Sharing the excitement of VOR's accomplishments over the past 26 years is exciting and we would welcome an opportunity to speak at one of your events or meetings, or share our literature. Please contact Julie Huso at husoj@sio.midco.net or at 605-370-4652. We look forward to hearing from you!!

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**H.R. 1255 Cosponsors**

**September 18, 2009**

**Total: 64**

**Sponsor: Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA)**

**Democrats (30)**

Rep. James Moran (D-VA)\*  
Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN)\*  
Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-MI)\*  
Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)\*  
Rep. Michael Capuano (D-MA)  
Rep. John Olver (D-MA)  
Rep. John Barrow (D-GA)  
Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL)  
Rep. John Larson (D-CT)  
Rep. James McGovern (D-MA)  
Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA)  
Rep. Charles Gonzalez (D-TX)  
Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)  
Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)  
Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA)  
Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)  
Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD)  
Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL)  
Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)  
Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL)  
Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)  
Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI)  
Rep. Al Green (D-TX)  
Rep. Lacy Clay (D-MO)  
Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO)  
Rep. Charles Melancon (D-LA)  
Rep. Marion Berry (D-AR)  
Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA)  
Rep. Eric Massa (D-NY)  
Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR)

**Republicans (34)**

Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX)\*

Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX)\*  
Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA)\*  
Rep. David Dreier (R-CA)\*  
Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA)\*  
Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA)  
Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)  
Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA)  
Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL)  
Rep. John Boozman (R-AR)  
Rep. Anh "Joseph" Cao (R-LA)  
Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX)  
Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ)  
Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL)  
Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY)  
Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)  
Rep. Gary Miller (R-CA)  
Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX)  
Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA)  
Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-GA)  
Rep. Sam Johnson (R-TX)  
Rep. Steve King (IA)  
Rep. John Fleming (R-LA)  
Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX)  
Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA)  
Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-MN)  
Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX)  
Rep. Rodney Alexander (R-LA)  
Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-TX)  
Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX)  
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)  
Rep. Dean Heller (R-NV)  
Rep. Donald Manzullo (R-IL)  
Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)

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**Editor:** Tamie Hopp, VOR Director of Government Relations & Advocacy

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

**TO JOIN OR CONTRIBUTE:** \$25 per individual, \$150 per family organization, or \$200 per provider/professional organization. Extra donations are welcome!

You may pay by check or credit card

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