



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:  
Help VOR Grow!**

## VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

**[Registration](#) and [Sponsorship Details](#) are now available for VOR's Annual Conference and Washington Initiative, June 8 - 12, 2013 in Washington, D.C. Please join us!**

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**Did you receive this as forwarded e-mail? If so, someone thought you would benefit from VOR's information. Please consider [joining VOR](#) and receive this E-News Update publication weekly!**  
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### VOR and YOU

- 1. Hotel Reservations: MAY 6 deadline fast approaching**

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All Conference, Dinner and VOR Meetings held at Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill (located directly across the street from the Liaison).

**Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill  
400 New Jersey Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001**

**Reservations due by May 6, 2013**

**\$5,000  
Challenge:  
Help VOR send  
advocates to  
Washington,  
D.C!**

**Make a Lasting  
Impact with a  
Will Bequest**

**VOR.net:  
Your one-stop  
advocacy  
resource**

To make your reservations:

Call 1-888-421-1442 (reference VOR) or [reserve your room online \(click here for VOR block\)](#)

The VOR Group rate is \$225 for single or double, plus tax, per night. Triple (\$250, plus tax) and Quadruple (\$275, plus tax) suites are also available. To receive group rate, mention "VOR."

## **2. Register for VOR's Annual Conference: There's still time!**

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**VOR Annual Conference and Initiative: *Facing the Future - Together We Will***

**June 8 - 12, 2013**

**Washington, D.C.**

[Click here for complete details, including agenda, conference registration and hotel reservation information.](#)

Information about [sponsorship opportunities](#) is also available on VOR's website.

## **Special Report**

### **3. A Haven for the Deaf Draws Federal Scrutiny Over Potential Discrimination**

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***New York Times* \* April 28, 2013**

When the subsidized housing complex for senior citizens opened its doors here last year, it already had a waiting list. Designed by a deaf architect to fit the needs of the deaf, its units have video phones and lights that flash when the phone or the doorbell rings. Wiring in common areas pipes announcements made through loudspeakers into residents' hearing aids.

The complex, meant to foster a sense of community among residents who use sign language to communicate and socialize, was the first of its kind in the Southwest. For the Arizona Department of Housing, which allocated federal money to help pay for it, it was a milestone, one that advocates for the disabled hoped would be a model for similar projects.

Preference was given to deaf and hard-of-hearing applicants, who occupy 69 of the complex's 75 units. The arrangement seemed to make sense; the state and the project's developer were convinced that they stood on solid legal ground.

But after an audit last year, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development began raising questions.

The project, named Apache ASL Trails in a reference to American Sign Language, now finds itself in an unlikely spot, facing charges of discrimination for favoring deaf and hard-of-hearing people over others, disabled or not.

The federal agency released its finding in January after examining marketing materials and the project's criteria for tenant selection, even though the developer assured it that the documents in question had been misinterpreted or were outdated.

Last June, HUD drafted a compliance agreement limiting the number of units set aside for deaf residents, which seems to have only stoked the dispute. State officials said the agency at one point threatened to withhold money from the state if it did not continue with the plan. But the state housing director, Michael Traylor, did not back down, saying he had to "stand up for the rights of disabled people."

Advocates for the disabled fear that the finding might complicate other projects in which federal money would be used to build housing for adults with special needs. Already, the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center, based in Phoenix, has scrapped plans to use federal grants to help pay for a development designed for autistic adults, opting instead to pursue private financing.

"Our intention has never been to exclude, but to make sure the units are utilized to the fullest extent possible, as the law requires," Mr. Schwenker said.

The demands from HUD mobilized advocacy groups across the country. Last week, [75 of them signed a letter from the National Association of the Deaf to](#)

[the federal housing secretary](#), Shaun Donovan, accusing HUD of “forcing deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to only live according to an ideological vision of forced integration.”

In an interview, the association’s chief executive officer, Howard Rosenblum, said the approach “ignores the unique communication needs” of the deaf, making them more isolated. Denise Resnik, a co-founder of the Southwest autism center, said the agency’s attitude felt “like reverse discrimination.”

By Friday, HUD had scaled back its efforts. A spokesman said the agency had decided to “take a pause” in the negotiations to give the state and the developer time to submit evidence demonstrating the housing needs of the deaf population to justify the use of federal money in the project.

[Read more](#)

### **Quotable**

*“Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are convinced beyond doubt that they are right.”* Sir Laurens van der Post (1906-1996), South African author

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### **Other Calendar Reminders:**

\* [Recorded - Listen Here](#). **Tuesday, April 23, 2013 - 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm central**

**FREE WEBINAR:** How Congress Works: The Basics. Hosted by Peter Kinzler and Larry Innis.

\* **TONIGHT!! Friday, April 26, 2013, 6:30 pm, [Mila in Concert](#):** Benefit concert by renowned concert pianist, Mila Belakova. Click here for [concert poster](#), [press release](#), and [details](#).

\***Through May 1, 2013 (for recognition opportunities):** [Be a Sponsor. Get a Sponsor: Support VOR's Conference and Initiative. Sponsorship opportunities, in partnership with EP Magazine, are now available.](#)

\*[May 6, 2013: HOTEL RESERVATION DEADLINE](#)

\* **Sundav. June 9. 2013**

VOR Annual Conference \* Washington, D.C. [Registration now available. Details online.](#)

**\* [Begins Monday, June 10, 2013](#)**

VOR Washington Initiative (Begins Monday, June 10, 2013) \* Washington, D.C. [Details online.](#)

**\* [AHCA/NCAL to host Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(ID/DD\) Day – October 6, 2013. Details online.](#)**

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