



WIG Summer Summit Series

July 1, 2020

“ADA 30th Anniversary – State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED)”

Featuring:

Lucy Gettman, Executive Director Women In Government

Shelby Kerns, Executive Director, National Association of State Budget Officers

Moderator: Alaska State Representative Geran Tarr, Secretary, WIG Board of Directors

Panelists:

Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor

Jill Houghton, President & CEO, Disability:IN

Tennessee State Senator Becky Massey, WIG State Directory

Lucy Gettman: Hello everyone and welcome to the [WIG Summer Summit!](#) We're smack dab in the middle of our five-week series and you joined us at just the right time. I'm Lucy Gettman, Executive Director of Women In Government and we'll be joined very shortly by our moderator, Alaska State Representative Geran Tarr, who is also Secretary of our Board. So while she's in the process of joining us, I wanted to welcome all of you to WIG's Summer Summit to celebrate the [30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#).

At the helm of Women In Government is our national [Board of Directors](#), and on behalf of the entire board, we're excited to have you join us.

I do want to thank and recognize all of our conference sponsors today and we wouldn't be able to do what we do without them, so thank you (you can see them on your screen)! In addition, we want to give special thanks and a big shout-out to our Business Council members and our Associate Members. Women In Government is grateful for your partnership. We know you believe strongly in our mission to continue to provide women state legislators with the resources they need to tackle top complex policy issues--tools that we need now more than ever.

So, Women In Government is all about [#ConnectingLegislativeLeaders](#) nationwide. I think everybody notices that, and we hope that everybody here stays in touch during and after today's conversation. You can find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [SoundCloud](#) using our event hashtag, [#WIGSummerSummit](#).

So now, I'm honored to introduce our Special Guest today: Shelby Kerns, the new Executive Director of the [National Association of State Budget Officers \(or, NASBO\)](#). Prior to joining NASBO as ED, Shelby Kerns served as Deputy Director at the Idaho Department of Labor, having previously worked in the Idaho Division of Financial Management (the state's budget office). In her earlier position as Budget Bureau Chief, she led staff in developing, presenting, and advocating for the Governor's Executive Budget. Her career has been dedicated to promoting Idaho and its economy. Welcome, Ms. Kerns!

Shelby Kerns: Thank you! Hi, everyone. I'm Shelby Kerns, Executive Director of the National Association of State Budget Officers. I assumed this role on March 30th, and given your positions in government leadership, you can imagine how daunting it was to start at that time. Not only are states facing a fiscal crisis brought on by the public health crisis—a fiscal crisis that is projected to dwarf the magnitude of



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the Great Recession—but I was taking on a leadership role at a time when I was unable to meet my staff face-to-face. Nor can I meet with those with whom I was collaborating to address the crisis facing states. But you know what, three months later, I can tell you it's working! It's working because everyone—all of my staff, NASBO members, colleagues from other associations, policymakers like yourselves, literally everyone—recognizes that we're in this together.

We've all been more creative in approaching challenges and in communicating, and we've all been more understanding of the challenges each individual is facing during this time. NASBO members are more engaged than ever, given the crisis, and we've had record participation, even when meeting weekly by conference call. We anticipate this will continue with our now-virtual annual conference. Honestly, I feel like women leaders are more suited to this moment—to its uncertainty and need for creative solutions. We tend to be more collaborative and flexible and more in-tune and empathetic with others. Being able to gauge how someone is coping with the emotional fallout of the pandemic over the phone or a video chat is extremely important in this moment, and women are much more intuitive in that regard.

I've had the pleasure to work with many female leaders in my career. When I was in the Idaho Budget Office, I was there for a decade, and for part of that time, Idaho had female co-chairs of its joint Legislative Budget Committee, a female head of the Legislative Budget Office, and two women in leadership in the Governor's Budget Office. We may not have always agreed, but we always communicated and work together where we could. Prior to that, I worked for the first female director of Idaho's Agriculture Department. Those experiences have taught me the value of female leadership and the importance of supporting other female leaders, not to mention future female leaders.

So, thank you for all that you do and for your leadership and your states, not only during this time of crisis, but every day. With your leadership, I know we can get through these trying times. I hope you all enjoy your main session. This is an important topic near and dear to my heart, as immediately prior to my appointment at NASBO, I served as Deputy Director of [Workforce Programs at the Idaho Department of Labor](#) under another female director, I might add. So, thank you all for tuning in, being engaged, and serving as examples of female leadership.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you for many things up to and including being such a great example of female leadership in the states.

While we're talking about states, between our [#WIGWednesdays](#) and our Summer Summit series, more than states' legislators and staff from more than 40 states have been represented on these sessions so Director, currently, you are reaching a national audience of policy leaders: fiscal experts, legislators and others, and we really appreciate being here. So if there any other parting words you have for us, we welcome them other otherwise we understand you have a very busy day ahead.

Shelby Kerns: I appreciate being asked to participate and look forward to listening into the rest of the session.



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Lucy Gettman: Thank you. Alright, so before we dive into our program (we're almost there), we want to make sure everybody is aware that if you have questions or comments you are welcome to share them. Just use the Chat Box to please enter your question or your comment (it's at the bottom of your Zoom toolbar) and please put “To: Everyone”, and we know that our speakers will do their best to get to all of your questions.

Okay, so I've been looking forward to this program for a very long time. And I'm really excited. We get to devote the entire afternoon to a discussion of Disability Employment Policy, especially in this 30th anniversary year for the Americans with Disabilities Act. We have a stellar panel of federal, state and private sector experts with us today.

This session wouldn't be possible without [WIG's multi-year partnership with the State Exchange on Employment and Disability](#), or, SEED. [SEED](#) is a unique collaboration among the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) of the U.S. Department of Labor, state policymakers, and organizations like WIG that work at the state and local level, and all of those levels of stakeholders are represented on our panel today.

Women In Government has been personally and actively involved in the SEED partnership. We have recorded [podcasts](#), [conducted panels](#) at our conferences, compiled [toolkits](#) and curated many, many [resources](#) that we will be sharing later in the program. So this is a high priority for us, and we appreciate the partnership, we've had with seed and the department over the years.

With us now is Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of [Disability Employment Policy \(or ODEP\)](#) at the U.S. Department of Labor; Tennessee State Senator and [WIG State Director](#) Becky Massey; and Jill Houghton, President and CEO of [Disability:IN](#).

First up is Deputy Assistant Secretary Jennifer Sheehy. She leads the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S Department of Labor, which develops policy to increase job opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities. Prior to this, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy served in several leadership roles working on disability employment at the federal and executive branch levels. We are honored to have her kick-off today's conversation on the ADA's 30th Anniversary, and we look forward to hearing how state and federal policymakers can work together effectively on this issue. Deputy Assistant Secretary, the virtual floor is now yours!

Jennifer Sheehy: I wanted to say, thank you so much for your partnership. It's always fun to see you, even virtually, and to work with you and the amazing people at Women In Government. Thanks for the opportunity today to talk as well. We're really excited because this is the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and in the Department of Labor, we are also celebrating, as you know, the [Women's Bureau Centennial](#), and I understand that you will have my colleague, Laurie (NOTE: Dr. Laurie Todd-Smith, Women's Bureau Director) begin another one of your Wednesday sessions coming up very shortly in a couple of weeks, but that's terrific!



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So, I'm going to talk a little bit about our office, the work we do on SEED with wonderful organizations like yours, and also about the significance of the ADA and this time.

So, you talked about flexibility, and I agree. I think we've all had to learn to be a little bit extra flexible right now, and one of the things that underpins the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) is the right to an [accommodation](#) or what we would call a “work tool” or “productivity tool”. And, that is basically just giving someone the tools they need to do the job, and I think in this virtual environment being flexible and figuring out what those tools are to operate virtually is what we need to be successful in the virtual environment. And, I know it's a really difficult time. We want to acknowledge that it is a very difficult time for many, many Americans right now. And, maybe people aren't in the mood to be celebratory and celebrating things like the ADA, but I think it's particularly significant, because the spirit of the ADA is access to all community life, work life, and family life, just like anyone else. Celebrating that or recognizing that is going to be important for all Americans to be able to contribute and get back to the work of a strong economy. So, it's certainly appropriate to do it at this time.

So, let me tell you a little bit about our office. ODEP is a policy office, and what that means is we test and develop policy solutions to improve workplace success for people with disabilities. To do that, we coordinate with all levels of government, state governments being particularly important because change happens at the state level and people are affected, and the real work happens at the state level. And, we work with employers as well.

So, with our SEED initiative—the State Exchange on Employment and Disabilities—it is one of our priority initiatives, our most successful initiative, and it's because so much policy affects people at the grassroots level. One important thing that I want to make sure people understand is that the federal government—through this initiative—is not trying to influence state legislation. What we're trying to do is take your goals and your priorities as legislators and help you implement those; help you figure out what other states might have done that you could adapt or adopt into your state; and then help you figure out how to implement it, how to make it happen, and how to scale it.

So, Lucy mentioned a couple of products that we've come out with during our initiative. One of them was in partnership with the [Council of State Governments](#) and the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), and it was a national task force that resulted in a groundbreaking report called [“Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities.”](#) This amazing document was a product of a culmination of intense deliberation and research, and it offers states 13 broad policy options and 48 suggested strategies, as well as more than 240 examples of innovative best practices that are happening in the states.

In addition, SEED and its partners have created a number of other resources, one being a [Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work State Policy Toolkit](#). Another was a [Disability Employment Legislative Database](#), and most recently, a report from the [National Task Force on the Future of the Workforce](#). One of my favorites was done in partnership with Women In Government, and that is a toolkit called [State Strategies to Assist Employees with Mental Health and Substance Use Issues: A Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work-Toolkit](#). It's a resource that is a supplement to the Women In Government's [Mental Health and](#)



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[Substance Use Disorders Toolkit](#), and it focuses on initiatives to improve employment outcomes for those with mental health and/or substance use disorders. It's such a priority for us in ODEP, and we really appreciate your leadership on it. We're super proud of these products.

Our Deputy Secretary, this is one of his favorite initiatives, and in fact, he cares and understands that action happens at the state level so much that he sent two letters to governors highlighting some of the best practices at state levels and then offering our services in ODEP to connect with states through the SEED initiative if any of those best practices were things that other States wanted to implement and wanted a little bit of help understanding how to do it. So, we're particularly happy about that too. The state policy options range from establishing a task force, to examining state disability employment policies, to improving transportation for job seekers with disabilities, to providing incentives for the private sector to employ people with disabilities.

I'm going to give you a couple examples, and of course one of the examples I would have given was Tennessee, but Senator Massey, I will let her tout her wonderful progress in Tennessee.

So, one was in New Jersey, where SEED engaged with the governor's office and Senate President Steve Sweeney to provide policy assistance that led to New Jersey establishing a [Task Force on Maximizing Employment for People with Disabilities](#) and enacting the [Apprenticeship Assistance and Support Services Pilot Program](#) which addresses the lack of affordable, reliable transportation and affordable high-quality childcare for individuals participating in apprenticeships.

Another one was in Alaska. So, SEED worked with the governor's office in Alaska—the Governor's Office on Workforce Development—and that led to the potential inclusion of people with disabilities in Alaska's Affirmative Action Plans and the creation of a [state centralized accommodation program](#) so that state agencies did not have to pay for accommodations. There would be a central program at the state level to pay for those.

In Pennsylvania, the SEED team helped representative Dan Miller with customized policy briefs on how states can act as model employers. So, he ultimately introduced a [house bill](#) (NOTE: HB 1548 2019-2020 session) that would enable Commonwealth hiring authorities to more effectively hire and promote qualified people whose physical or mental health disabilities impact their ability to participate in the competitive hiring and promotion process. Representative Miller also introduced a [house bill](#) (NOTE: HB 113 2019-2020 session) that would require that all individualized education programs for high school seniors with disabilities included plans to transition the student from high school into college. He is now working on legislation to promote inclusive apprenticeship opportunities. As a side, ODEP has lots of [tools on inclusive apprenticeships](#), and they're very, very popular tools, and we're happy to help with those two.

I love hearing about these great examples, but I think it really goes to showing that lasting change takes collaboration and action from all levels of the government, and that the combination of federal and state policies will maximize our ability to ensure that all people can put their skills and talents to work.



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So, before I close, I want to just mention too to recognize the [ADA 30th Anniversary](#) and the [Women's Bureau Centennial](#). You can go to the Department of Labor website (NOTE: dol.gov). We just, a couple hours ago, launched a great [ADA 30th anniversary website and timeline](#) that has lots of ideas for how to recognize the event and posters that you can download. The theme this year is “Increasing Access and Opportunity,” and I do think that is certainly something that's important right now. One of the quotes that I like is by someone who said, “the role of leaders is not to create followers, it is to create more leaders,” and I firmly believe that at Women In Government, that seems to be your mission. We just enjoy working with you so much, and we look forward to the progress we can make, and we'll get together to celebrate the ADA anniversary in another 30 years. Thank you very much.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy, for your wonderful remarks and thank you for being a leader and recognizing the strong partnership between federal, state, and local change-agents and policy leaders.

I'm also excited because we're going to have another leader from the Department of Labor as part of our program this summer to celebrate another anniversary. We just learned that women's Bureau director Laurie Todd-Smith is able to be our Special Guest on July 15th in observance of the centennial anniversary of the women's Bureau with the Department of Labor. So thank you, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy for taking time out of your day. I know you're going to stick around with us for a little while and so I just remind folks to share their questions and their comments in the Chat Box for Deputy Assistant Deputy Secretary Sheehy.

And it's now my very special pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's Summer Summit series and that is State Representative Geran Tarr of Alaska. She previously was on the WIG Board as Regional Director for a 14-state region in the United States, and recently has advanced to the Executive Committee as Secretary of the Women In Government Board. However, her personal engagement has been very meaningful in our SEED work having launched at one of our conferences, the toolkit that the Deputy Assistant Secretary mentioned on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders. So with so much that she brings to the table, welcome State Representative Geran Tarr as moderator of today's program.

Representative Tarr: Thank you so much, Lucy, and, as is the case with legislators sometimes there is a kind of scheduling snafu, so you are wonderful in helping me to get started, thank you.

And now we're going to transition to Senator Massey to discuss the work that Tennessee has been doing around disability employment.

Senator Massey was elected to Tennessee's Senate in 2011. She serves as the Chairman of the Senate Transportation and Safety Committee and is a member of the Health and Safety Committee. Prior to her legislative career, Senator Massey served for 24 years as the Executive Director of the [Sertoma Centre](#), an organization that provides adults with intellectual disabilities vocational and life skills training; mental health supports; and residential services. Senator Massey was also a member of the “Work Matters: National Task Force of Workforce Development for People with Disabilities” that Deputy



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Assistant Secretary Sheehy referenced. Senator Massey, thank you for joining us today, and now I turn the mic over to you!

Senator Massey: Thank you Representative Tarr, and it really is just an honor to be with everyone here today, and I know everybody's taking time away from a busy schedule. It's always been an informative, and you know, joy to work with the folks at SEED, starting with the Work Matters program and then I also served on the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work and am currently on the Future of Work. So, I'm learning how to work, I guess, or at least expand working opportunities!

What I'm really going to be discussing today is the legislation that I was able to pass this year: the [Tennessee Accessible Transportation and Mobility Act of 2020](#). This new law creates the [Office of Accessible Transportation in our Department of Transportation](#), which is dedicated to improving and expanding accessible transportation. It builds on and improves transportation services that offer more opportunities for people with disabilities and older adults to access healthcare, gainful employment, social activities, and their faith communities. **Transportation is not an amenity.** It's life support for people who need it to access groceries, critical health care, and their jobs. Around the country, transportation remains the top barrier to inclusion for people with disabilities and people who are aging. Current research confirms that significant barriers to employment and community inclusion persist because of lack of accessible transportation, despite the passage of the ADA 30 years ago, which was passed this month. In communities around the country, patchworks of funding programs and resulting transportation services exist to meet the needs of these individuals, but the end user has difficulty navigating this complex menu of transportation options in their community.

In Tennessee, as I'm sure in most states, this has traditionally been provided and coordinated at the local level. Accessibility looks different depending upon where you live—rural versus urban—and it's harder to find, or is not as reliable in some communities than others. The need for statewide support of a coordinated and accessible transportation was recognized by a coalition of state disability organizations after hearing many stories from Tennesseans with disabilities about the need for better accessible transportation options. Some of these stories include they could get transportation, but it would only take them to the county line and they would have to get out and take Uber for the last mile to get to their doctor. There was a young lady who presented in my Transportation Committee that talked about being let out at the wrong place where she really didn't know where she was, and it was pouring-down rain. And, I've got a friend with a daughter who had to turn down a job due to the transportation costing more than their daughter would make at the job, and it was a really good job opportunity too.

Members of the coalition approached me, and with my background at my disability agency, I knew the historical challenges and was excited about carrying the bill. The partners working on the on the legislation included the [Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities](#), the [Arc of Tennessee](#), [Disability Rights Tennessee](#), and also the [Department of Transportation \(TDOT\)](#). While we ultimately passed the bill unanimously—and that was bipartisan unanimously in both chambers—as with many bills, we had to work through some issues.



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At first our TDOT did not see the need for this new office, as they already had a division of multimodal resources. We explained that this unit draws down federal funds for accessible transportation needs. These funds are designed to target localities, and not entire regions or statewide initiatives. What we needed was coordination between the counties and regionally to really offer effective and reliable transportation.

As usual, we had to address the funding for the staff positions and the operations of the office. It was determined, in our case, that we were not drawing down all of our [Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program](#)'s funds, and that these funds could be used to fund the office. We also tried not to be too prescriptive, so we could give the Commissioner the ability to set up the office as he best determined.

What this legislation does do is offer a new sustained level to support localities across Tennessee who are already tackling these issues. It says that by March 31, 2021, the office will produce and share with the General Assembly a mission statement and scope of responsibilities, a five-year strategic plan, and an annual report about accessible transportation in Tennessee. They will convene an advisory committee of stakeholders that includes experts in transportation, aging, and disabilities, and then also people who use accessible transportation. They will work with this advisory group to identify how the needs are being met now, and then what the state's needs and solutions need to be. As this will change over time, they will produce this report annually.

[The law](#) states that government agencies will coordinate with TDOT toward the goal of expanding and improving accessible transportation and mobility across Tennessee. Some of the possible solutions might include memorandums of understanding between our counties and also the development of public private partnership to meet these needs. It also could include the ability to look at increased funding for these services outside the general norm and possible new solutions there. We are excited to be the first state in the country to offer this dedicated state office and look forward to building on and improving transportation services that offer more opportunities for people with disabilities and older adults to access healthcare, economic opportunity, self-sufficiency, and community.

As a side note, since we are celebrating the 30th anniversary, I was able to pass a [joint resolution](#) by members of both chambers on marking the celebration of ADA's anniversary. Right now, I'm working on setting up a press conference locally to present it to disability providers and individuals with disabilities to bring more public awareness to what the ADA is, what it has to offer, and how we can continue to make strides there.

So, with that, Representative Tarr, I think that gives a framework to folks that might like to do something similar in their state, and as always, I would be happy to help with copies of our legislation and the [code](#) and any technical advice that any of our members from across the country might need.

Representative Tarr: Thank you so much, Senator Massey, and you already have one request for that so I'm glad you're making that offer and I hope that there are more. One of the great benefits of participating in WIG is that we get to share some of these work products and don't have to reinvent the



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wheel. Through my work with WIG and SEED, I've gotten to know legislators from all sides of the political spectrum and people who are working really hard on this. Working across party lines and coordinating government functions is crucial in achieving successful policy outcomes for people with disabilities. So, WIG, it wants to be a leader in that effort and make those connections. So, thank you for sharing and again, a reminder to folks to use the Chat Box and that resource will be shared. But remember, we will have time for questions and if there are more specifics, we can cover today. Thank you, Senator Massey.

Senator Massey: You're welcome.

Representative Tarr: Now, we are going to continue on. We also can't over-state the importance of comprehensive stakeholder engagement. I'd like to, now, introduce Jill Houghton, President and CEO of [Disability:IN](#), the leading non-profit resource for business disability inclusion with a network of over 220 corporations worldwide. Jill and her team work to build an inclusive global economy where people with disabilities can participate fully and meaningfully in the work place.

They empower employers, entrepreneurs, and employees to advance disability inclusion through their nationally recognized programs, including: [The Disability Equality Index](#); the [Supplier Diversity Program](#); [NextGen Leaders Initiatives](#), and; [Inclusion Works](#), which has resulted in over 40,000 people with disabilities being hired. Thank you so much for joining us today, and the floor is now yours!

Jill Houghton: Thank you, Representative Tarr and wow, how do you follow Senator Massey and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy? So—Happy ADA 30! And, most importantly, looking forward to the next 30, to the impact that business can make together in partnership with government with each of you.

At Disability:IN, to just paint a little flavor about who we are if you're not familiar with us, we're really, if I was going to paint a picture in your mind, the place where business and talent with disabilities intersect. And, truth be told, we grew out of the Americans with Disabilities Act, because the one thing that the authors of the ADA knew, is that it couldn't legislate attitudes. And quite frankly, business has the power to change the world. So, if one company's doing something that's good for their bottom line, the other company wants to know what it is, right? Their competitors want to beat them. And so, it's all about disability inclusion.

We have [affiliates](#) across the country. We're located in a lot of your local communities, and we're a partner. I'm going to shine a light on something called the [Disability Equality Index](#) and then talk to you about how we're engaging with local states through the Disability Equality Index. So, if you're not aware of the Disability Equality Index, it grew out of companies asking where, do I get started? How do I get started on the disability inclusion journey? So, our organization, Disability:IN, joined forces with another organization called the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#), or what we like to call AAPD. So, we came together, and we joined forces with them because they're grassroots and we're business. We formed a committee and they created a tool called the Disability Equality Index. That's a survey. It's a survey that's designed to invite a company to look at their leadership and culture, their enterprise-



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wide access, their employment practices, their community engagement, their supplier diversity, and their non-US operations.

So, there are six categories they answer questions that take over 40 hours to answer. It's designed for the Fortune 1000 and the AmLaw 200 firms, and it's weighted. There are weighted questions and there are non-weighted questions. So, when a company answers a question, they have to substantiate their answer, and they can score a 0 to a 100. We only celebrate the companies that score an 80, a 90, or 100. The ones that score below 80, you'll never know. But, that's because it's a carrot and not a stick. We're here, and we're intended to help companies get better. We celebrate those top scoring companies, recognizing that even if a company scores 100, there is no such thing as perfect. It just means that they're committed and that they want to do better.

So, the question is, how does the DEI, which you can look up at disabilityqualityindex.org, connect to you at the state level? Well, first of all, you have companies that are in your local locale that are participating. So, go out there and check out who those top scoring companies are. Perhaps you're engaging with them on other issues, and this is an opportunity for you to engage with them on conversations around disability inclusion. Learn about what they are doing. Discover ways that you can work together.

Based on the participation in the DEI, we joined forces with [Accenture](https://www.accenture.com), and we set out to study the data. So, we've studied the data, and we produced a business case called [Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage](https://www.gettingtoequal.com). You can find it and disabilityequalityindex.org. And, what that data demonstrated is that it pays to be inclusive. So, what we found were companies that were participating in the index and doing well had 28% higher revenue, double the net income, and 30% higher economic profit margins. So, in other words, they had a better bottom line.

Using that data, we joined forces, really led by the efforts of Ted Kennedy, Jr. because he's the board chair of AAPD, we joined forces with the State Comptroller in New York. And Comptroller DiNapoli took that Accenture report and said, “listen, we in New York State are responsible for the third largest public pension plan in the world. And, you have provided the business case that I need to recognize that disability inclusion is the next frontier in ESG investing.” And as one of the nation's largest shareholders, he has the ability to call on the companies that they invest in and say, are you participating in the Disability Equality Index? What are you doing to advance disability inclusion? Now Comptroller DiNapoli used that data to join forces with the State Treasurer in Oregon, Treasurer Tobias Read. Together, they formed something that we call the [Joint Investor Statement on Corporate Disability Inclusion](https://www.jointinvestorstatement.com). You can find that statement at disabilityequalityindex.org.

If we fast forward to today, this is a joint investor statement that continues to remain open for signatories to join in. So today, we have 22 signatories that manage over \$2.8 billion in assets. So, how many states have signed on? We have nine: Connecticut, (the District of Columbia isn't a state, but), the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. There are other signatories, because there's 22 of them today, including companies like Bank



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of America, but there are nine just drawing your attention if you're wondering if your state or your state treasurer is one of the signatories.

Another way that I would call attention to how we're working with states to advance disability inclusion is that through the Disability Equality Index, we're measuring something called [Supplier Diversity](#). Why is that? That is because self-employment and owning a small business is a form of employment. And we know that actually, people with disabilities are two times more likely to own their own business, and when they own their own business, our data demonstrates that they're six to seven times more likely to turn around and employ people with disabilities.

So, that being said, through the Disability Equality Index, we're advancing this effort. We're advancing the inclusion of disability owned businesses and service disabled veteran disability owned businesses in procurement, not just on the corporate side of the fence, but we want to advance it on the state side of the fence. So, what I can tell you is that we are, also at Disability:IN, the [certifying body of disability-owned businesses](#). There are these third parties that the states and corporate America work with. So, for LGBT-owned businesses you work with the [National LGBT Chamber](#), or for women-owned businesses you work with the [Women's Enterprise Business National Corporation](#). For minority-owned, it's the [National Minority Supplier Development Council](#). For disability, it's Disability:IN.

So, to date, in terms of states, Massachusetts and the state of Pennsylvania both issued executive orders and you include disability-owned businesses in your supplier diversity from the city level. You know, we're just getting started. We've got the city of Philadelphia, we have Jersey City, New Jersey; Hoboken, New Jersey; and Long Beach, California. Now we've got a long road ahead of us, but using this anniversary, using the ADA 30 and looking forward to the next 30, we look forward to working with all states to recognize and include disability in your state procurement. And maybe one of the ways that you start by doing that is start by measuring the number of people with disabilities in your state that own businesses and the disparities that exist in terms of contracting. So, including people with disabilities in your disparity studies, that's step one. So, thank you so much for this incredible opportunity, and I'll yield the floor back.

Representative Tarr: Thank you so much, Jill. That was an amazing presentation, and I think a lot of things to follow up on, for me. I know I was nodding constantly because of that. And I hope that others, again, will put in the Chat Box if you have questions. What we're going to do is transition to a few questions that we came up with here to start out, I get to ask them first.

So, we're going to go back to our first speaker, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy. As we look forward, what could we expect in the next 30 years? What are some of the barriers policymakers could still address and how could a future workforce (and by extension, workplace) ensure inclusivity for people with disabilities?

Jennifer Sheehy: Thank you, and yeah, that was fascinating to listen to both of those amazing women!



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So, that's a big question. ODEP is trying to look ahead at the [future workforce](#), and some of the things that we're already working on and seeing are technology related. I think this current environment has accelerated our pace into the technology arena—things like artificial intelligence, extended reality, augmented reality, and autonomous vehicles. All of this is happening right now, and we need to ensure that the foundation, the policy, which I think of as foundational, is there so that people with disabilities are not left behind as technology advances, meaning that developers, companies that purchase the technology, brilliant people that dream up the next technologies, that there are policies in place that ensure that people with disabilities in that perspective are included from the start.

There's a concept or a term for that concept called [Universal Design](#), which means that you're designing at the get-go for all people so that you have the largest number of users comfortable. So, for autonomous vehicles, of course, it'll be really important because what we see is that we're not going to be purchasing autonomous vehicles, probably for a while, but they will be in fleets like Uber or Lyft, that kind of thing. The controls, how someone finds them, the apps on the on the phone, all that needs to be accessible. Artificial intelligence, oh my gosh, we're using that already now in so many ways, including recruiting and filtering through resumes and that kind of thing. But I think, and it's not just with people with disabilities, but there can be inherent biases built into those algorithms. So, it's really important that we make sure that whatever large databases of information or profiles of people are included when those are being developed, but they also include people with disabilities. So, I think that's, that's really important with those things.

I heard this morning a statistic that floored me. It was a [2017 study](#) that was done by Dell and another company and they said that 75% of jobs in 2050 don't exist today. So, that means we all have to evolve, but that evolution also means it can separate people with disabilities more or it can be inclusive more of people with disabilities. So, I think just to have that concept in our head going forward is really important.

Representative Tarr: Those are such helpful ideas. Thank you. I want to mention Universal Design again. That sounds like something we should all be thinking about, because we could be thinking about our public buildings and other institutions and be forward thinking in that. So, thank you so much for that suggestion.

I think because of time, what we're going to do is just one each for our presenters and then make sure we can get to some participant questions as well. So, Senator Massey I have one here for you. You mentioned that you were a member of the [Work Matters: National Task Force of Workforce Development for People with Disabilities](#). One of the report's key recommendations is encouraging states “to be model employers of people with disabilities.” Can you talk more about what you were able to achieve in Tennessee on that recommendation?

Senator Massey: Thank you Representative Tarr, and that is a work in progress. I came back after serving on the Work Matters Task Force, and I pulled together a legislative task force both of House and Senate members to look at disability services across our state primarily to educate them more on it, because I've got have a better feel for it. One of our key recommendations was making the state a



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model disability employer. So, last year I filed the first legislation, but we had a new governor, and I wanted to get their buy in and their thumbprint on it to work with it. So, we worked on it over the summer and fall, and we had it ready to file this year or to amend this year based on their input. We were all set to go, and then obviously the pandemic hit and so we weren't able to get it funded this year. While it wasn't a large amount, it was still enough that we couldn't add it to the budget.

So, I've been working with the governor's office. In fact, Assistant Deputy Secretary Sheehy, you'll enjoy this. The letter that your secretary sent to our governor, I took that to my governor's chief legislative staff person and said, see, it says that one of the main recommendations is the state as a Model Disability Employer, and this is what we've been working on, and maybe over the summer and fall, you all could do an executive order saying that I will be following up with legislation next year to operationalize it. So, I'm still working with it. I feel confident that we will pass it next year. But, sometimes things take just a little longer than you hope. And Jill, I just wanted to give you one correction. Back in 2017, I passed legislation in Tennessee that [added businesses owned by individuals with disabilities to our Diversity Business Enterprise for procurement](#). So, you can add Tennessee to one of the states. It wasn't done by executive order. It was done legislatively, so it is actually in state law. So, all is good. Thank you.

Representative Tarr: Well, thank you so much. And of course, all of us can empathize with the COVID-19 pandemic derailing your legislative plans for this year, but it does bring us to a good point. Jill, to ask you, what are you hearing from your business members regarding the pandemic and how it's impacting employers and employees with disabilities? And what are they doing to help folks get through that?

Jill Houghton: Well, first of all, thank you, Senator Massey. That's awesome news about disability-owned businesses in Tennessee. So, to your question Representative Tarr, I think that what the pandemic has created is an opportunity to [lead with humanity](#). We are all women. We're really good at multitasking. In the old days you were on a call and somebody's kids is crying in the background or there's a dog barking, and people were irritated by that. And now, I think, we're leading with humanity. We're, starting calls, and it's like we're checking in by asking, how are you doing? We're not bothered that there's a kid in the background or that there's a dog barking or that there's people walking around.

So, I think that it has created an opportunity in a very unique way for us to really elevate the conversation around mental health and around hard topics like suicide prevention and substance abuse, and to really lean into these important topics. I also think that it has demonstrated that whether it's at the state level or it's in a company, that your greatest resources are your people, your employees. And many of you at the state level, you have employee resource groups, or companies have employee resource groups. It's a great way to go to your people and to check in and to learn about things like whether it is mental health, how people are doing, and what you at the state level or at the company can do better and do differently. Or to Jennifer's point around things like accessibility, 30 years ago when the ADA was passed, it was about getting on the bus right, getting in the front door, accessing the telephone, and using public accommodations. Now, we've got all of these apps on our phone and our computer, and there's all these technology devices, and are they accessible? Do we have captions? Do



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we have the ability to make things accessible to everybody? So, we've learned a lot, and we've got a long way to go.

Representative Tarr: Well, I love the lead with humility and humanity--that's perfect! I hope that's the takeaway for all of us. I want to thank everybody for their great answers to those few questions. Again, we will be sending out some of the resources mentioned today, certainly a link to legislation that Senator Massey has sponsored and has gotten passed. So, we'll share that resource with everyone and some of the resources that Jill mentioned and also information about ODEP.

Thank you once again to our panelists for this incredible discussion. We're grateful we get to mark this important anniversary, even if it's remotely. This is landmark civil rights legislation, and we have to remind everyone of that. If you have a quick last comment or closing sentence, we have just enough time for that. Jill, we'll start with you.

Jill Houghton: I just want to say happy ADA 30, and thank you very much.

Representative Tarr: Thank you. Senator Massey?

Senator Massey: I just want to thank everybody for being here today. And, just know that a lot of these folks don't have a voice, and they need our best, and we need to be that voice for the ones that don't have it. So just go forth and do all you can and where you plan it, as best you can.

Representative Tarr: Thank you, Senator. And then last but not least, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sheehy.

Jennifer Sheehy: I just want to say that this work is hard, but it is fun when we get to work with fantastic partners, and that is why we just love the collaboration with the businesses and Jill and the states and the organizations like Women In Government. So, thank you so much.

Representative Tarr: Thank you, everyone. I just want to bring everyone's attention to the screen here. These are resources for the State Exchange on Employment and Disability, SEED, and we also would like to invite you, if you'd like to learn more, to please listen to WIG's newest podcast: [“Increasing Access and Opportunity—30 years of the ADA.”](#) That can be found on our [website](#). That's where you can find additional SEED resources and the WIG toolkits, the Work Matters full report, and so much more. We do have other toolkits, so please visit those as well.

To the legislators, we still have slots available to record a [Radio Public Service Announcement](#) in time for August National Immunization Month. WIG is also happy to announce that registration is live for our [in-person conference in Orlando](#) this November. We are planning to be able to see each other in person in November. Please contact Women In Government staff or visit <http://www.womeningovernment.org> for more information on these great opportunities.



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We also want to invite you--this is very cool—to join us on [Twitter](#) next week, July 6th and 7th to celebrate the [PBS premiere of The Vote](#). Please check your local PBS listings for local broadcast times and let us know that you are part of this virtual remote watch party as we celebrate that important anniversary as well. And then please don't forget to join us next week on Wednesday, July 8th at 3pm ET for the fourth of five sessions in the Summer Summit Series featuring N.O.B.E.L. Women President Tennessee Representative Karen Camper as well as programming around “Chlorine Disinfection in the time of COVID-19,” a segment on the “Science of Risk,” and a timely presentation on a “Holistic Approach to Anxiety,” something we can all use.

Thank you everyone for your time today. Thank you again for joining us, and I hope everyone has a safe and healthy Independence Day!

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