



# PEOPLE'S VOICE

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## Mission Statement

To advocate for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently through the removal of all barriers.

## Goals

- To promote the philosophy of independent living.
- To eliminate attitudinal, environmental, and communication barriers which perpetuate discrimination experienced by people with disabilities.
- To replace the perception of disability as a tragedy with a sense of pride, power, and personal style.

## Candidate Questionnaires

*Scott Burlingame, Executive Director*

In an effort to better inform voters with disabilities, this election cycle Independence, Inc. undertook an effort to ask candidates running for office directly about a few of the issues that people with disabilities may care about this election cycle. We asked all the major candidates running for US House and Senate, the Governor of North Dakota, as well as everyone running for North Dakota Legislative office throughout our service area four basic questions in order to allow them to present to us their vision of how they will address the issues facing people with disabilities. Sadly, not every candidate responded to the multiple efforts by our office to get their input. The following responses are from US Senate candidate and current US Congressman Rick Berg, and North Dakota gubernatorial candidate and current North Dakota State Senator Ryan Taylor. We would like to thank Congressman Berg and Senator Taylor for taking the time to fill out the surveys and sharing their views with the readers of The People's Voice.

We will be posting the responses from the people who are running for local legislative districts on our website ([www.independencecil.org](http://www.independencecil.org)) and will be glad to share those responses if you call our office and request them.

***It is important to note that the following information is shared for informational purposes only and should not be seen as an endorsement of any candidate for any office.***

### **Independence Inc., Candidate Questionnaire Election 2012 • Candidate Name: Rick Berg**

• *The state of North Dakota, and specifically the 11 counties served by Independence Inc., has some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. However, studies have continued to show that employment rates for people with disabilities are significantly lower than the rates of those without disabilities. How do you feel this problem can best be addressed?*

**Answer:** The disconnect between overall low unemployment in

*Continued on page 2...*

the community and underemployment among the disabled suggests that we have much work to do. I believe we need a multi-pronged approach to address this issue: (1) We need to continue training programs such as those operated by Independence Inc., (2) Greater outreach to the business community to educate employers and break down stereotypes, and (3) Continued advocacy with government leaders to understand the needs and challenges faced by the disabled and the organizations which exist to assist them.

• *We have an extreme shortage of affordable; community based and integrated housing options for people with disabilities throughout our service area. What policies or programs would you support to help change this?*

**Answer:** The shortage of affordable housing – particularly in western North Dakota – is a challenge shared by all members of the community. However, many of the issues surrounding housing are addressed at the State and Local level. For example, transportation and other infrastructure policies are most often set in Bismarck and have a direct impact on housing availability. Likewise, regulations such as zoning and housing codes are determined locally. The Federal Government retains also a significant role in housing both in direct support through HUD as well as a large role in providing access to credit for affordable housing construction through the LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credit). As a Member of the House Ways & Means Committee with jurisdiction over the tax code, I have and will continue to support reauthorization of this vital program to encourage the construction of more affordable housing across North Dakota.

• *Health care access is an issue that affects all North Dakotan's, but specifically adults and children with disabilities. What policies will you support to fully ensure access to much needed medical treatment, including access to mental health treatment, throughout our state?*

**Answer:** The Federal Government most directly supports state medical needs through Medicare and Medicaid. The single greatest threat to these programs is the massive and rapidly growing federal debt – totaling over \$16 trillion and growing at a rate of over \$4 billion per day. If we fail to bring this debt under control, interest on that ballooning debt will increasingly crowd out important national priorities like providing adequate medical care. I'm committed to preserving and protecting Social Security and Medicare, which is why I've voted consistently to reduce the debt.

• *What do you see as the biggest barriers facing people with disabilities in North Dakota in 2012? How do you feel these barriers can best be removed?*

**Answer:** Education is the key to removing barriers for the disabled. We need more organizations such as yours which not only provide services – which are obviously important, but also to serve as a vital link in telling the story of the many successes and challenges overcome by the disabled every day in North Dakota. People need to understand that the lives of young women, like Debbie Denatdeale, who you highlighted in the Spring newsletter, enrich and should inspire us all.

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director  
Dee Tischer, Direct Services Coordinator  
Therese Besemann, Community Accessibility Specialist  
Jill McDonald, Finance Director  
Connie Klein, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator  
Pamala Mondragon, Information Specialist  
Dawn Olson, Independent Living Specialist  
Inez Rose, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator

**ID Statement**

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# My Voice

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

A few years ago, I was visiting our Congressional Delegation in Washington, DC and took a cab to the “Hill”. The cab driver dropped me off next to an older looking house that appeared to be a museum. It was only a short time before my meeting, so I did not have time to explore, however, I made note of the name of the house and decided that I would “Google” it later on and find out more about it.

The house was the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum. When I found out what it was, I was extremely disappointed that I did not tour it, and I quickly added it to my “must visit” list if I ever get back to DC.

The Sewall-Belmont House has been the home of the National Woman’s Party (NWP) since 1929. The story of the formation and early activities of the NWP is one that I think of every election cycle, and one that is not well enough told in America today.

The origins of the NWP dates back to 1913, when Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organized in order to champion the cause of Women’s Suffrage. The NWP was not a political party, but rather a group of “militant suffragists” who attempted to take up the cause of the right to vote for women that had been for over 50 years. The NWP held parades in Washington and became the first group to picket for women’s rights in front of the White House by holding non-violent “Silent Sentinels”.

In response to the Silent Sentinels in front of the White House, Lucy Burns and Alice Paul, along with many other members of the NWP were arrested and charged with the trumped up charge of “obstructing traffic”. While they were being held at the Occoquan Workhouse, they went on a hunger strike and were force-fed by jail personnel as a consequence. In all, over 168 members of the NWP were arrested, held and mistreated at the Occoquan Workhouse. Eventually, stories of how the protesters were treated reached the press, and led to all of the women being released and created support for the suffrage amendment, which was finally ratified on August 18, 1920.

Why is this relevant today? Well, less than a hundred years ago, in the “Land of the Free” over half of the citizens were denied the right to vote. When they protested, they were arrested and tortured by their government. Yet they kept the fight on, and won the right to vote. Yet today, sadly, nationally about 33% to 50% of eligible voters do not vote in most elections.

According to census data in 2010, only about 43% of people with disabilities voted. This is an unacceptable number to me. Numbers like this may go a long way in explaining some of the social, political, and economic problems facing people with disabilities in America today. There is an old saying that if you don’t vote, you don’t get to complain about government. Well, I take that a step further, and say that if you don’t vote, you cannot expect your issues to be addressed by those running for office. Putting together this newsletter is much harder than it should be, but people running for office don’t often answer questions about disability specific issues (even when presented with an opportunity to do so). So we are attempting to change this. In this issue of *The People’s Voice*, we are presenting disability specific information from the people you will be voting for. We are also offering up trainings to people with disabilities to assist them with better navigating the voting process. While we will not make any enforcement of any candidates or any issues, we do fully endorse full participation in the voting process for all people with disabilities and we fully encourage everybody to vote this election cycle.



## **Independence Inc., Candidate Questionnaire – Election 2012**

### **Candidate Name: Sen. Ryan Taylor, Candidate for Governor**

• *The state of North Dakota, and specifically the 11 counties served by Independence Inc., has some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. However, studies have continued to show that employment rates for people with disabilities are significantly lower than the rates of those without disabilities. How do you feel this problem can best be addressed?*

**Answer:** At a time when North Dakota has some great achievements—low unemployment, a massive surplus—we also have challenges that deserve our attention.

As governor, my ultimate priority would be to ensure all North Dakotans maintain the unique and special quality of life we have all come to know and expect. I believe our friends and neighbors with disabilities want nothing more than that same quality of life and to overcome the barriers to independence that stand in their way.

Education is one of the most important investments we can make in our future, and we must make sure all people have access to an appropriate, affordable, integrated education to develop the work and life skills necessary for a life of independence. A governor's budget reflects our priorities, and a Taylor budget would ensure programs assisting individuals with disabilities are represented and adequately funded. This includes services ranging from Vocational Rehabilitation to public transportation systems, both of which are so important to low-income people and individuals with disabilities who simply want to get up and go to work each day.

In a Taylor administration, all voices would be heard. We would help promote employment first, enforce North Dakota's anti-discrimination laws, and work to eliminate the misconception that people with disabilities are not as productive or as loyal as those without disabilities.

• *We have an extreme shortage of affordable; community based and integrated housing options for people with disabilities throughout our service area. What policies or programs would you support to help change this?*

**Answer:** Within our current housing incentive fund, only half of those dollars are specifically targeted to median-income earners. I believe that if we are going to put public dollars into these kinds of programs, we should increase that target level to assist more of our people, especially those who most need the assistance. In addition, any housing being built with public dollars should always include accessible units in order to increase housing options for folks with disabilities.

For those who do have homes, we want to be sure they can stay in them. We've proposed a property tax relief plan that is simple and broad-based, calling for a \$100,000 reduction of the true and full valuation of a North Dakotan's primary residence or agricultural property. This reduction would be in addition to any homestead tax credit currently provided to elderly or low-income earners with disabilities. In an effort to assist our renters, our plan also includes a credit to the renter's income tax that is 15 percent of that individual's annual rent, with a maximum credit of \$900 per year.

• *Health care access is an issue that affects all North Dakotans, but specifically adults and children with disabilities. What policies will you support to fully ensure access to much needed medical treatment, including access to mental health treatment, throughout our state?*

**Answer:** I have a long history of strong support for making health care more accessible to our most vulnerable citizens, and my support, as governor, to meeting that goal would not change.

As governor, I would continue to advocate for expanding access to North Dakota's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), increasing Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and support of these services through Medicaid dollars, and expanding the capacity of mental health providers here in North Dakota.

These services don't come for free, and North Dakota deserves a governor who understands the challenges families face regarding access to affordable health care. We know that an individual is better able to be self-sufficient and contribute to our state, communities and workforce when he or she has a healthy mind and body.

• *What do you see as the biggest barriers facing people with disabilities in North Dakota in 2012? How do you feel these barriers can best be removed?*

**Answer:** North Dakota is growing and changing very rapidly and our state's prosperity continues to rise, these benefits aren't reaching all of our people. We need to make sure that those who face the most challenges – the elderly, our children, low-income, and individuals with disabilities – are not left behind.

I believe the most effective way to break through many barriers is education, and that's why much of our campaign for governor focuses on making improvements in education, and that would include education for individuals with disabilities. Without a proper, integrated education to learn life skills, finding employment and becoming an independent and active participant in one's community is much more difficult.

#### Other Comments:

Throughout this campaign, I have said that I'm running to be "The People's Governor". I believe North Dakota is at a crossroads, and we need a leader who will stand up and speak up for ALL our people – young and old, rich and poor. We need a governor who will leave a legacy long after this oil has been harvested, someone whose priorities and goals are set keeping the quality of life of all North Dakotans in mind.

During my ten years in the State Senate, I have been a proud supporter of improving opportunity and enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. As your governor, my door would always be open, and I would be a partner with you in meeting your mission by advocating for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently and by helping you remove those barriers that stand in anyone's way.

## Information

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your e-mail address to [pamalam@independencecil.org](mailto:pamalam@independencecil.org)

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call 701.839.4724 or 1.800.377.5114, or email us at the above address.

If anyone is interested in receiving this newsletter in an alternative format or would like to submit articles or information of interest to individuals with disabilities, contact our office at 839.4724 V/TTD.

The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

The opinions expressed in "The People's Voice" are not necessarily those of Independence, Inc. Mention of any product, service, or event does not constitute any endorsement or recommendation by Independence, Inc.

Editorial Board: Scott Burlingame,  
Jill McDonald, Pamala Mondragon

# Recreation Destinations

*Therese Besemann, Community Accessibility Specialist*



Consider taking your friends and family on an adventure into the wild side of Minot. Plan a day trip to one of Minot's leading destinations; a treasure of the Minot Park District. Check out some of the 'Wild Happenings' at Roosevelt Park Zoo, 1219 Burdick Expressway E. in Minot.

Numerous volunteers, along with zoo staff have been working many long hours to make necessary repairs. The Zoo Education Center is a beautiful, openly designed facility which includes the gift shop, visitor information area, an auditorium for educational programs and zoo offices. Even though

all our animal friends have not returned home, the public still has opportunities to visit and support the Zoo. Roosevelt Park Zoo is preparing to have the animals returned and re-open the zoo to visitors for the 2013 season. Most of the animals will return, a few will not and others will be new species at our zoo. The Zoo staff used the flood as an opportunity to re-designed some of the animal enclosures and enhance their living environments; which will result in happier, healthier animals and also improve the experience of visitors.

For more information about Roosevelt Park Zoo, please visit their website at [www.rpzoo.com](http://www.rpzoo.com) or call (701) 857-4166.

## Consumer Corner

*As told by Cindy Sime*

Hi, my name is Cindy Sime and I would like to share my story with you. First of all, I didn't know of Independence, Inc. I was referred to them by the Minot Area Homeless Coalition, who helped me with my rent. Karrie at that agency was kind, helpful, and never made me feel less than her, so YAH! for Karrie. On with my story...I called Pam at Independence, Inc. and made an appointment. I talked with Dee and she referred me to agencies I never knew were available to me—so helpful.

On about July 10th or so, it was 100 degrees; hot, sweaty summer weather. I have COPD and live on the 15th floor of the Milton Young Towers, which I call the "Concert Milton." Breathing was the worst and going outside was really hard. I am an ol' farm girl and love me some outdoors! But my COPD keeps me in a lot. So I thought...hum, I think I will call Pam at Independence, Inc. and see what, if anything, she can do for me. I called Pam, what a funny but friendly-going voice—she kills me—makes you feel like a friend. First, let me say, I am an outgoing, happy-go-lucky, 55 year-old, who after working in Minot 'cooking all my life' – I became physically disabled, living on SSDI, which means a tight budget. Oh! I almost forgot, I am so, so Irish and full of it! Anyway, I say," Pam is there anything you can do to get a 55 year-old, disabled, full-figured woman with COPD, who lives on the 15th floor—remember: heat rises!—an air conditioner?" "An air conditioner," she says, "Well I have never had a request like that so let's see what we can do." Within a week or two she calls back saying Community Action has purchased a new air conditioner for me, all we need is paperwork and to put it in. I was beside myself! I couldn't believe one phone call and Pam did her magic.

I am so grateful. I can breathe...life is great!! Let me say, I could go on and on, about our phone calls back and forth – so funny, but bottom line – life is good! If it wasn't for Pam and Independence, Inc; I would be "puddin' on the floor due to the heat." I can't thank them enough for being the most helpful, "roll up your sleeves" agency and for gettin' it done. I tell my story when I can and refer people. What a blessing you all are at Independence, Inc. I send my thanks, prayers, and heart-felt gratitude to you all!

# ***Information on Voting in North Dakota***

## **ELIGIBILITY**

- North Dakota does not have voter registration
- You must be a US citizen
- Be 18 years old on Election Day
- A resident of your precinct for at least 30 days before Election Day
- Provide one (or more) of the eligible forms of ID

## **IDENTIFICATION**

- Must show date of birth and voting address
- Can include one or more of the following:
- Drivers license, state issued ID card, utility bill dated 30 days prior to the Election Day
- If you do not have one of the above forms you may sign a voters affidavit attesting to your eligibility to vote

## **ELECTIONS IN NORTH DAKOTA**

- Each county has at least one polling place open on Election Day.
- Help is available from election judges or someone you bring with
- Everyone may choose to vote absentee but you must first fill out an application
- In some counties send applications to all active voters

More Info visit [www.nd.gov/SOS](http://www.nd.gov/SOS)

- Find out what contests will be on the ballot and who is running
- View your sample ballot
- Find your polling place
- Fill out an application for an absentee ballot
- Learn about ballot measures
- View instructional videos

Please join us for one of the following opportunities to learn more about voting.

- During the 4th Annual Independent Living Fair on October 25th, 2012 from 2pm - 5pm at the Sleep Inn & Suites convention room, located at Dakota Square Mall, Minot.
- Or by calling our office anytime for a one-on-one consultation.



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## ***Introducing Dawn Olson***

*Dawn Olson, Independent Living Specialist*



Hi, my name is Dawn Olson and I am excited to be working at Independence Inc. My first day of employment was August 1st, 2012, as the Independent Living Specialist. I attended the Anne Carlson School in Jamestown and graduated from there in 1979, at which time I went off to college at Brigham Young University in Provo, UT. I graduated from BYU with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communicative Disorders. A year later I started my first job with the US Forest Service in Ogden, UT. I was with the Forest Service for one year then began working for the Internal Revenue Service for the next 17 years. In 2002, I moved back to Minot and worked for the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities as the Consumer Liaison for the Center until 2012.

From a very young age, I was encouraged to live as independently as possible and I am very proud of the things that I have been able to accomplish in my life. Living independently with a disability is not easy and can be very frustrating at times. I realize that independence looks different for everyone. It is my hope that through my job as the Independent Living Specialist and through my own personal experiences you will feel comfortable working with me in reaching your independent living goals. I am here to help and I look forward to watching you grow as you reach whatever goal you have set.