

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Special Needs Alliance Joins Federal Agencies and Disability Advocacy Groups to Break Down Barriers for those with Disabilities**

**August 23, 2010 (TUCSON, Ariz)** The Special Needs Alliance (SNA) has teamed up with the National Council on Disability and representatives from the U.S. Departments of State, Labor, Education, Housing, Transportation, Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and other public and private agencies to help develop a more integrated way of addressing federal disability policies and programs. The backdrop for this renewed commitment to collaboration was the recent National Summit on Disability Policy in Washington, D.C., where Bridget O'Brien Swartz, president of the SNA, was among the 400 appointed delegates.

"So many Americans living with disabilities want to contribute fully in every aspect of society, but many barriers to economic independence and full community engagement still exist," said O'Brien Swartz. "The summit was a unique opportunity to explore how their potential can be meaningfully maximized, which included putting experts from various disciplines together, hearing about related issues and addressing their cross-over to move closer to solutions."

Discussed at the Summit were many seemingly separate policy areas which actually have cross-over implications for those with disabilities. For instance, as more and more job opportunities are promoted online, lack of accessibility to websites for those with certain disabilities can create barriers, while for others, ongoing transportation issues can stand in the way of long-term, meaningful employment.

The SNA will continue to serve as a resource to the Council and Summit delegates. Some of the areas with which the SNA is likely to be involved are:

- Providing insight on the drafting of rules and regulations regarding the new healthcare reform law
- Assuring that those with disabilities can obtain financial independence without losing access to public benefits
- Helping state and local governments bridge challenges in meeting the needs of those with disabilities during challenging economic times, and implement federal directives and options that impact those with disabilities
- Ensuring that those living with disabilities in military families have the same ease of access to benefits as the rest of the population

“On the heels of the Summit, the Special Needs Alliance is more motivated than ever to work with other stakeholders to ensure that the needs of the disability community are met,” said O’Brien Swartz. “We are encouraged that we have a voice in this important process moving forward.”

### **About the National Council on Disability**

Established by Congress as an independent federal agency, the National Council on Disability promotes policies and programs that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society. To carry out this mandate, the Council gathers public and stakeholder input, reviews and evaluates federal programs and legislation, and provides the President, Congress, and federal agencies with advice and recommendations. The Council considered the credentials of more than 1,400 delegate candidates, and ultimately appointed 400 delegates to the National Summit on Disability Policy.

### **About the Special Needs Alliance:**

The Special Needs Alliance (SNA) is a national, not for profit organization of attorneys dedicated to the practice of disability and public benefits law. Individuals with disabilities, their families and their advisors rely on the SNA to connect them with nearby attorneys who focus their practices in the disability law arena. SNA membership is based on a combination of relevant legal experience in the disability and elder law fields, direct family experience with disability, active participation with national, state and local disability advocacy organizations, and professional reputation. The majority of members have been certified as Elder Law Attorneys (CELAs) by the National Elder Law Foundation, the certifying entity for the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA).

For more information about the Special Needs Alliance, or to locate a member attorney in your area, visit [www.specialneedsalliance.org](http://www.specialneedsalliance.org) or call 1-877-572-8472.

