



Spring 2024

# ***OHIO CONNECTION***

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

## **ACB'S 2024 LEGISLATIVE IMPERATIVES**

The following are key issues that were pieces of legislation in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress that ACB seeks to have reintroduced and passed in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. These bills will help ACB members in furthering independence and bettering quality of life.

### **The Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act**

Access to websites, applications, and online services impacts most aspects of everyday life. There is a need for enforcement standards that clearly state websites, applications, and online services must be accessible to people with disabilities. People who are blind, low vision, and deafblind face countless barriers when accessing workplace portals, educational platforms, healthcare and public health information, transportation services, shopping, and entertainment over the internet.

ACB calls on Congress to support and pass the Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act. This bill would establish clear and enforceable accessibility standards for websites and software applications and establish a technical assistance center and advisory committee to provide advice and guidance on accessible websites and applications. It would also authorize a study on addressing emerging technologies.

### **Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act (CVTA)**

Passed in 2010, the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) guaranteed access for people with disabilities to advanced communications services, telecommunications hardware and software, accessible video displays and user interfaces and digital apparatuses, and required the delivery of audio-described content. For more than ten years, ACB and its members have worked to implement and enforce the CVAA, and in several key aspects, we have reached the limits of what the CVAA is able to enforce.

The CVTA reaffirms our nation's commitment to accessible communications and video technologies for people who are blind, low vision, and deafblind. Once passed, this legislation will:

- Improve and expand audio description standards for television programming and online video streaming platforms to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable access to the wide range of programming available to the general public;

- Update current requirements to ensure viewers can easily activate and select preferred settings for audio description on their video programming devices, such as televisions, smart phones, laptops, and tablets;
- Require the Federal Communications Commission to ensure that all video conferencing services, including those used for telehealth, distance learning, and social and civic engagement, are accessible to people with disabilities, including people who are blind, low vision, and deafblind; and,
- Empower the FCC to ensure accessibility regulations keep pace with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and augmented or virtual reality platforms.

## **Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act**

The majority of home-use medical devices and outpatient equipment utilize digital display interfaces that are inaccessible to blind and low-vision users. Devices such as glucose monitors, blood pressure readers, and at-home chemotherapy treatments do not have any non-visual accessibility features like text to speech output, tactile markings, or audible tones built in. As a result, blind and visually impaired individuals cannot use them safely, making it difficult for these individuals to manage their health independently.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults with vision loss are at a higher risk for further health complications and co-morbid conditions. Diabetes-related vision loss and old age are two of the leading causes of vision loss in the United States, both of which could lead to further health complications. It is therefore imperative that blind and low-vision individuals have access to the equipment and devices necessary to manage their health and prevent further health complications, and that the equipment and devices are accessible with speech output and tactile markings. The COVID-19 pandemic has also underscored the need for accessible medical equipment and the need for blind and low-vision individuals to be able to manage their health and wellness safely and independently, especially during a public health emergency.

The goal of this act is to make home use medical equipment and devices accessible to blind and visually impaired individuals in the United States. If passed, this legislation would amend the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish non-visual accessibility standards for Class II and III devices with digital interfaces. Class II and III devices include devices that are more invasive and involve a higher risk of injury or death, so it is much more important that these devices are used safely and as directed. The FDA would, in consultation with the U.S. Access Board, set regulations and a final rule according to those standards. The passage of this legislation would make it easier for people who are blind and low vision to manage their health safely

and independently by ensuring that product manufacturers incorporate accessible design in the beginning stages of development for home use medical devices.

### **The Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits Act**

In 2008, The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) adopted regulations prohibiting Medicare and Medicaid coverage of eyeglasses and any device that uses lenses. The regulation, known as the Eyeglass Exclusion, also prohibited coverage of devices designed to aid individuals with low vision, including handheld magnifiers, video magnifiers, and other devices necessary to enable such individuals to access and interpret visual and written information. These devices are vital to enhance independence and improve quality of life for individuals with low vision. Devices designed to magnify and improve the readability of text enable low-vision individuals to access information found on prescription medicine bottles, street and building signage, and other safety and security information. Access to low-vision devices is thus a crucial component of maintaining one's mental and physical health.

Low-vision devices can often be out of reach for many individuals with Medicare or Medicaid benefits due to cost. Such devices are vital to maintaining health and avoiding complications resulting from mismanaged health and sedentary lifestyles. (These devices often mean the difference between remaining in one's own home or community and being placed or remaining in an institutionalized setting.)

If people with low vision are unable to access valuable information relating to medication or feel unsafe going out and participating in their communities due to not having the right tools, then their mental and physical health will suffer. It is time for CMS to rescind the detrimental low-vision device exclusion and start providing coverage for low-vision devices like magnifiers and other devices that enhance color contrast and lighting conditions. Such devices are necessary to improve quality of life for low-vision individuals and allow them to remain in their community.

### **Reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration**

In early February, the FAA reauthorization package passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee. Both the House and Senate packages contain key provisions that would make air travel easier for people with disabilities. Sen Duckworth (D-IL) included provisions that would make the service animal attestation process simpler with a TSA pre-check like system with documented known service animal users (Section 738), would set accessibility standards for airline websites and mobile applications (Section 739), and improve the physical accessibility of airports (Section 610). Another key provision is Section 736, which requires the Department of Transportation to publish regular reports on complaints filed by disabled travelers against airlines. ACB urges the final reauthorization package to keep these and other disability-related provisions.

# MATCHING GRANTS

By Brant Adams

Our matching grants program can be a big help when paying for expensive adaptive equipment. Funds are available to any blind or visually impaired resident of Ohio to pay half the cost of a purchase up to \$1000 dollars. Examples include, but are not limited to, screen readers, braille displays, and CCTVs and other magnifiers.

The funds are to be used for new equipment. Requests for money to cover the cost of repairs is considered on an individual basis. We do not cover funding for training; for that, contact Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities at 800-282-4536.

The program also provides funding for ACB-Ohio chapter projects. If your chapter has an idea for a project, but lacks the means to make it happen, apply for a matching grant and you could receive up to \$1,000.

Complete the [online form](#) and supply either an invoice showing the expected cost or a receipt from the vendor within 90 days of purchase. If an item has been purchased, ACBO will send the buyer a check for the approved amount. If the item has not yet been purchased, ACBO will send funds directly to the vendor. Application is not complete until all required documents are received.

If you have any questions, feel free to email matching grants committee chair Brant Adams at [brant@acbohio.org](mailto:brant@acbohio.org) or contact the office at 614-261-3561 or [acbo.director@gmail.com](mailto:acbo.director@gmail.com)

## SAVE THE DATE!

## FALLFEST WEEKEND IS SEPTEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup> AND 28<sup>TH</sup>



The sports and recreation committee and local Lions clubs are hosting the second fallfest event the last weekend in September. We will be staying at the Best Western Plus in downtown Wooster. Rates are \$124.99 per night plus tax.

**Meals** – Breakfast is free with hotel room. Group meals are planned for Friday and Saturday dinners, and other meals are on your own.

**Cost** – While the actual cost is yet to be determined, we estimate it will be between \$60 to \$100 per person. This fee will cover Friday and Saturday night dinners and all activities. Hotel and travel costs will be separate.



**Activities** – The fun starts with Woosterfest, a street fair with live music, craft vendors, food trucks, a beer garden, and themed competitions, including a wiener dog race. We will tour Long Military Museum, a family-run museum honoring veterans of Wayne County, and the Izaak Walton League conservation group is offering hiking, fishing and possibly archery. We will hike on ADA accessible trails at local parks and play indoor games like cards and twister.

For more information contact Caleb McKinsey (phone/text 216-624-3205 or [caleb.mckinsey@gmail.com](mailto:caleb.mckinsey@gmail.com)) or Catherine Bister (phone/text 330-464-1355 or [catbister@aol.com](mailto:catbister@aol.com)).

## **ACBO'S OHIO STATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT EXPRESSES HER GRATITUDE**

As a recipient of American Council of the Blind of Ohio's scholarship I wanted to thank you for funding this scholarship for me. I am from Nutley, New Jersey, and I am studying early childhood education with a dual license in visual impairment. I have always loved working with kids my whole life; the only jobs I have ever had are working with kids! In my future, I want to further children's knowledge while being the best support system for them. I want them to know that they are able to do anything they put their mind to and that they are capable of so much.

I chose this major because I do honestly enjoy working with children and I want them all to feel accepted and loved no matter what background they come from. I chose to get a VI dual license because I want to help children or adults who have a disability and I also want them to feel accepted and for them to know that even if they are visually impaired, they are still the same as people who are not and they are still capable of the same things.

This scholarship has helped further my education in so many ways. It provided me with financial support to help further my education to reach my dream. I have not received any other awards or scholarships yet, but I plan to apply to so many more after receiving this one, so thank you! I have been involved in many school settings over my college career. I used to go to The University of Rhode Island and I worked in a first-grade classroom up there. Last semester, I worked as a youth leader at a local elementary school in Columbus. These experiences have shaped me, not only to be a better teacher, but a better person. Thank you so much!

***Sincerely,  
Nicole Eltzholtz***

# **ACB-OHIO AWARDS**

By Vicky Prahin

Do you know someone who helps blind and visually impaired people by reading mail, running errands, working on technology, or housekeeping? Has a group or organization in your community provided a service, donated funds for a project, or helped in some way? Have you read an article about blindness, adaptive equipment, or new techniques that stood out? Do you know a teacher of the blind and visually impaired or an employer who has gone the extra mile? If you answered yes to any of these questions, consider a nomination this year.

ACBO has seven awards which we present to show appreciation and to honor a person or a group. For more specific information, go to <https://www.acbohio.org/convention/awards/> and read about the awards. You can write your own nomination or use the simple form provided. Send nominations or questions to [acbo.director@gmail.com](mailto:acbo.director@gmail.com) or contact this year's awards committee chair, Vicky Prahin, directly at [vickyprahin@gmail.com](mailto:vickyprahin@gmail.com).

## **ARTISTIC ADVENTURE: THE CLEVELAND CHAPTER'S EXPERIENCE WITH ACCESSIBLE ART**

By Rachel Densmore, ACBO Greater Cleveland Chapter President

As someone who is almost completely blind, touring an art museum is not the first thing that comes to mind when I plan a fun Saturday afternoon. Sure, when I was a kid and had more vision, I loved to draw, and even went through a phase of telling people that I wanted to be an artist when I grew up. Since losing more vision as an adult, art is not really something I engage with on a regular basis. Thanks to a recent exhibit at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, I reconnected with art in a way that has been fun, meaningful, and accessible.

The Cleveland chapter holds monthly events to provide opportunities for new experiences, build social connections, and have fun. On this particular Saturday in February, 16 blind, low vision, and sighted participants traveled 45 minutes to Oberlin, Ohio.

When we arrived, we split into two groups. Mine visited the Digital Reimaginings exhibit first, which is described on [the museum website](#) as "a multimodal approach to museum learning through 3D prints of artworks along with their scans, audio descriptions, braille, and large-text labels. Ellis Lane, the curator and mastermind behind it, shared an overview of the exhibit and the process he used to bring his idea to life.

Many of us were already familiar with the details, as he had graciously spoken at our January chapter meeting. He passed around one of the pieces and asked each of us to share what we observed. We repeated the process with the second piece of the

work and saw how the two fit together. As we explored and learned more, Ellis showed us specific features: the mother holding a child on her shoulder, the way the curved patterns fit together between the base and the lid, the ornate details inside and out, and a repeating pattern of snakes and dogs where the two almost blended together. As we explored the object, he asked us to guess what it was for. Was it a candle holder? Or for storing milk? What about a sugar dish? We learned that the object was for storing salt, a prized and expensive possession in the 15th and 16th centuries. It was carved by a skilled African artist before being transported to Portugal. As our time at this station came to a close, we got to see the other 3D prints, learn more about them, and ask some questions.

At our next stop, the tour guides provided an audio description of a massive 6-by-9-foot abstract painting. They explained that the artist had created the work by dumping whole cans of paint onto this giant canvas and then spreading the paint to the rhythm of music. Many of us wondered aloud what type of music the creator might have been listening to and what she was feeling.

Then we created our own art. We were shown a Japanese tea dish and the tour guides explained that in that culture mistakes and wear and tear are not covered up, they embrace and emphasize them. We were each given a piece of modeling clay and were told to listen to the music and create something, not worrying about mistakes. Our works included a football, a golf club, and an abstract piece that reminded me of shoelaces. Mine was a turtle, complete with a shell full of pinched ridges and nail marks to emulate the patterns on its flippers. After the conclusion of our tour, we headed off to Lorenzo's Pizzeria, a local favorite in Oberlin, then we headed home with our new works of art.

This was truly a great and well-thought-out experience. I also got to see some of the planning, as I joined fellow Cleveland chapter member and ACBO board member Niral Sheth on the focus group panel throughout the fall. In my opinion, one key part of making something accessible is collaborating with and getting input from people who are blind, visually impaired, or have other disabilities. Ellis certainly did that. The focus group included a tour of the museum and exhibit, a Zoom discussion, and a questionnaire. Ellis asked about everything, including the 3D prints, labels, audio descriptions, accessibility of the app, and the physical layout of the space. He was willing to listen and I cannot think of a suggestion that was not implemented. We had a wonderful time, and I truly appreciate the hard work that Ellis and his team put into this.

The Allen Memorial Art Museum is a free museum on the campus of Oberlin College, about 45 minutes west of Cleveland. This exhibit will be on display through May 26. The 3D prints will then be incorporated into the museum's education collection. The museum's app includes information and many audio descriptions of its other works. To learn more, visit <https://amam.oberlin.edu/exhibitions-events/exhibitions/2024/01/27/digital-reimaginings-printing-towards-accessibility>.



## LOOKING AT EVIDENCE THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS: MY EXPERIENCE AS A BLIND JUROR, PT. 2

By Caleb McKinsey

In November of 2023, I was summoned for jury duty. In the first part of this series, I explained my misgivings and trepidation around serving. All voting citizens are legally obligated to serve if called to do so; however, I did not know how visual evidence, such as camera footage, for example, could be described in a neutral way so as not to create bias for either side.

My unease about navigating the justice center was put to rest when court staff and those on the jury panel helped without hesitation. My guide dog also loved the new building and found our three days there a great adventure. I concluded my previous piece by saying my fears were unfounded. The case I helped to decide presented its own unique challenges and educational moments.

Twelve jurors are required to sit on a criminal case. Twenty-two of us were drawn to allow for variety in the jury selection. Attorneys use the process known as *voir dire*, (“speak truth” in French) to gauge backgrounds and biases when selecting prospective jurors. The case I sat on was for a criminal charge and the trial lasted three days. The judge outlined the crime committed and the resulting charges. Both prosecutors asked thorough questions and had each witness retell their story in descriptive ways so I could follow along.

To understand the jurors and to make sure nothing would impact the case in any way, each of us was thoroughly questioned. Due to the nature of the case, such questions addressed gun ownership, past trauma, if we had any relation to law enforcement officers and/or attorneys. Those who answered yes were questioned further. The judge and attorneys wanted a thorough and clear understanding of who they would be working with during the trial. For me, the questions were straightforward until I was asked by one of the state prosecutors if I felt able to render a verdict. I expressed my uncertainty that if evidence of a visual nature was shown, with me being totally blind I felt unequipped to assist. I was selected by the judge to be an alternate juror, ready to step in if one of those on the panel became unavailable. Of the 22 who entered the courtroom for the case, 14 were selected as jurors. The panel consisted of 12 jurors and two alternates.

I ended up as one of the 12 sitting jurors because one got sick. The judge allowed me to enter and exit the courtroom before the others, allowing me and my guide dog to get situated in the jury box. During witness testimonies, each was thoroughly ques-



tioned in such a way that I was able to develop a clear picture of how the crime was committed. Most of the evidence was camera footage, so the witness testimonies were very helpful. I found this three-day trial very educational, and I am glad the court made accommodations to help me participate.

## **WORKING FOR CHASE**

By Troy Sullivan

When I left Chase in 2016, I had no intentions of returning. Let me tell you my story of why I'm proud to be back at Chase.

I started with Chase back in 2007 in the overdraft collections department. I worked there for nine years before moving on to cxLoyalty. In 2021, just after the pandemic, cxLoyalty was bought out by Chase, so I joke that Chase chased me. Honestly, I'm glad to be with Chase once again.

Fast forward to 2023—we got word that the loyalty department at cxLoyalty was shutting down. Due to my circumstances, I went onto the Chase jobs app and started looking and applying. I needed a new role, but I didn't want to leave Chase because of the wonderful benefits and how well they have treated me. After three months of applying for jobs, I got an offer as a call center fraud specialist 2. I'm a person that likes a new challenge, so I accepted.

In my new role, everyone is welcoming and friendly. I even crossed paths with a lot of former coworkers, some from when I was in overdraft collections 15 years ago who still remembered me. I have people coming up to me all the time telling me what an inspiration I am to them. It warms my heart to know that and that people remember me.

Chase has its own accommodations and assistive technology departments that help employees be successful. They also have an accessibility Ohio group which I'm proudly part of.

Thank you, Chase, for supporting me every step of the way. I also want to thank my former cxLoyalty management team for all they did for me. I encourage anyone with a disability who is looking for a job to give Chase a try. If you're searching for a job, be sure to take a look at [careers.jpmorgan.com/us/en/home](https://careers.jpmorgan.com/us/en/home).



**ACBO Community Shares Campaign Codes**  
State of Ohio 19003 City of Columbus 60240  
Franklin County 60240 Ohio State University 60240  
Columbus State 1061

# MY EXPERIENCE AT ACB'S LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

By Niral Sheth

The leadership conference was an awesome experience. Conflict resolution experts from George Mason University spoke about different styles of handling conflict and how to effectively engage in difficult conversations. We broke into small groups and talked about conflicts we faced and discussed how we dealt with them.

My favorite experience was getting to know Ray Campbell, ACB's second vice president. One night we had a "dine around the town" outing and I joined a group that went to Epic Smokehouse—the steak was great!

During the legislative part of the conference, we reviewed ACB's five legislative imperatives for this year (these are described at the beginning of this newsletter). The last day, we went to Capitol Hill and advocated for these imperatives at several Ohio legislators' offices. It was a great experience and I recommend this for anyone who is interested in advocating to improve the lives of people with blindness and low vision.



*Vicky Prahin and Niral Sheth at Sen. J.D. Vance's office on Capitol Hill*

## A HUGE WIN: CENSUS WILL NOT ALTER DISABILITY QUESTIONS IN THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

From the National Disability Rights Network ([NDRN](#))

Washington, DC – The Census Bureau announced they are dropping plans to alter questions about disability currently included in the American Community Survey (ACS). The Census Bureau had proposed changes to the disability questions in the ACS this past September and sought public comment.

The National Disability Rights Network and other disability-focused organizations expressed profound concern about the proposed changes. The new questions, they feared, would have a strong possibility of undercounting the disability population leading to reduced funding for critical federal programs and loss of data demonstrating the needs of the community. The Census Bureau also failed to consult with the disability community about the proposed changes.

“The Census and specifically the disability questions in the ACS survey, are one of the very few sets of data we have from the federal government about the disability population in the United States,” said Marlene Sallo, executive director of the National Disability Rights Network. “This numerical information is critical in formulating federal, state, and local policymaking that impacts the disability community.”

NDRN worked with the disability community to encourage members of the public to provide feedback and comments opposing the proposed changes, resulting in more than 7000 comments.

“We are very pleased by the Census Bureau’s decision to listen to our community and retain the current ACS disability questions,” continued Sallo.

**Newsletter Committee: Katie Frederick, Caleb McKinsey, Malaina VanderWal, Michelle Spillan, Editor**

As always, thanks to the contributors: As always, thanks to the contributors: **Brant Adams, Catherine Bister, Rachel Densmore, Nichole Eltzholtz, Vicky Prahin, Caleb McKinsey, National Disability Rights Network, Niral Sheth, and Troy Sullivan.** The *Ohio Connection* is a quarterly publication of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio. Please submit your material in print or via e-mail, and include your name and phone number. E-mail items to [acbo.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:acbo.newsletter@gmail.com) or send them to **ACB-Ohio, 3805 N. High St., Suite 305, Columbus, Ohio 43214, Phone: 614-261-3561.** The summer issue deadline is **May15.**



**ACB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & CONVENTION  
“WHERE THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT”  
JULY 5-12, JACKSONVILLE  
<https://acbconvention.org/>**



American Council of the Blind of Ohio  
3805 N. High St., Suite 305  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

FREE MATTER  
FOR THE BLIND

## ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK

**MARCH 23**, 7 P.M., MULTI-STATE AUCTION BY OHIO, INDIANA, KANSAS, OKLAHOMA, MICHIGAN, AND SOUTH DAKOTA AFFILIATES, REGISTER AT

[HTTPS://COHERENTAUTOMATION.COM/ACB-INTERSTATE-BENEFIT.HTML](https://coherentautomation.com/acb-interstate-benefit.html)

**APRIL 3**, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

**APRIL 11**, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7 P.M., VIA ZOOM

**APRIL 20**, ACBO BOARD MEETING, 2 P.M., VIA ZOOM (USE MEETING CODE 6142613561)

**MAY 1**, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

**MAY 9**, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7 P.M., VIA ZOOM

**MAY 15**, ACBO SUMMER NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

**JUNE 5**, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

**JUNE 13**, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7 P.M., VIA ZOOM

**JULY 5-12**, ACB NATIONAL CONVENTION, JACKSONVILLE, FL

