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Center for Public
Representation

Newsletter May 2026

Dear Friends,

As spring turns to summer, CPR continues to advance disability rights through impact litigation, advocacy, and collaboration nationwide. In recent weeks, we filed an amicus brief supporting the rights of nursing facility residents to make informed choices about living in the community, secured an important victory in the longstanding Texas Olmstead litigation regarding unnecessary institutionalization, and reached agreement with Connecticut officials to strengthen voting access for institutionalized voters with disabilities. We are also excited to welcome Equal Justice Works Fellow Rachel Bechtel this fall, whose work will focus on challenging overly restrictive guardianships and advancing Supported Decision-Making. From community integration to voting access, these efforts demonstrate CPR's deep commitment to protecting the rights, dignity, and self-determination of people with disabilities.

With gratitude,

Cathy Costanzo, Executive Director

Judge in Longstanding Texas Olmstead Case Agrees with CPR's Proposed Plan for Relief

On June 17, 2025, a federal judge in San Antonio issued a landmark and detailed (475 page) [decision](#) holding that the State of Texas was violating the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in nursing facilities. On April 14, 2026, the judge issued a supplemental [order](#) that adopted CPR's proposal to update class member information since the 2018 trial.

Based upon the 2018 trial record, Judge Garcia ruled in June 2025 that Texas had violated the rights of thousands of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by unnecessarily segregating them in nursing

facilities. The state then claimed that facts had changed since the trial seven years earlier, and, therefore, a remedial order based not appropriate, especially because the state had made sufficient changes to its systems that the ruling was wrong. CPR and co-counsel proposed that the court order an independent expert to conduct a limited review of current circumstances of class members in order to craft an appropriate remedy. The April 14 Order agreed with CPR's proposal and directed the parties to jointly develop a scheduling order for this limited review, which must be submitted to the court by May 29, 2026.

CPR Protects Voting Rights of Disabled Voters in Connecticut's Institutions

CPR and the state of Connecticut have reached agreement regarding voting rights of people with disabilities who are institutionalized in the state. The Secretary of the State has issued an interpretative [Opinion](#) that sets forth the legal rights of voters with disabilities who are placed in institutions in the state. The Opinion makes clear that institutionalized voters have the right to equal access to voting opportunities, and to reasonable accommodations to avoid discrimination. These rights include: registering up to Election Day, voting in person and individually absentee in some circumstances, choosing their assistor, and the right to privacy and appropriate and accessible technology. These changes and clarifications of institutionalized voters' rights under the ADA and the Voting Rights Act will make a meaningful impact on their ability to participate in the electoral process. This successful outcome results from almost two years of investigation and negotiation in collaboration with Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT).

CPR [co-presented](#) with the Secretary of the State's office to over four hundred local election officials on the provisions of the Opinion on April 22. CPR will work with colleagues at DRCT and with other advocates to

CPR Files Amicus Brief Supporting the Right of Nursing Facility Residents to Make an Informed Choice on Whether to Move to the Community and Receive Transition Assistance

On May 11, 2026, CPR, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and eight other national disability rights organizations filed an [amicus brief](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in *Brown v. District of Columbia*, a lawsuit brought by Disability Rights DC and AARP on behalf of nursing facility residents under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) challenging the District of Columbia's failure to provide them services in the community. Following a trial, the lower court found that nursing facility residents lacked the opportunity to make an informed choice on whether to live and receive services in the community. The court ordered the District of Columbia to provide residents with information and education on community services, assistance with community transition, and a sufficient capacity of community services. Our amicus brief explains the necessary components of providing informed choice for institutionalized persons with disabilities, including ensuring that residents can visit community settings and speak with peers who have moved to the community, and why these services are necessary to comply with the ADA's integration

share information, educate [voters](#) and [advocates](#), and monitor compliance through this election season to determine if further legal action is merited.

mandate. Amici are represented by CPR, the Bazelon Center, and the law firm of Sidley Austin.

CPR Welcomes Rachel Bechtel, Equal Justice Works Fellow in the Fall

CPR is thrilled to welcome Rachel Bechtel this fall as an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by The Arnold & Porter Foundation. One of the nation's most prestigious and highly competitive public interest legal fellowship programs, Equal Justice Works supports emerging attorneys developing innovative projects that address pressing legal and social justice challenges. Rachel's fellowship will focus on pioneering creative impact litigation strategies to challenge overly restrictive adult guardianships and expanding access to Supported Decision-Making as a less restrictive option.



While at American University Washington College of Law, Rachel served as President of the Disability Law Society, a student attorney in the Disability Rights Law Clinic, SBA Director of Accessibility, and a member of the Moot Court Team. We are excited to have Rachel join CPR and look forward to the important work ahead.

Support CPR Today

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