

2004 DREDF MILESTONE: Next year, we celebrate our 25TH ANNIVERSARY and launch our second quarter century—leading the struggle for disability civil rights.

Defending federal non-discrimination mandates

Directing Attorney **Arlene Mayerson** and Attorney **Silvia Yee** wrote several Supreme Court briefs representing members of Congress on the key issue confronting the civil rights community—the authority of Congress to require states to comply with non-discrimination, civil rights, and environmental law mandates. We have filed a brief in *State of Tennessee v. George Lane and Beverly Jones*, a case concerning whether Congress has the constitutional authority to require states to pay money damages for violations of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which bans discrimination in all state and local government programs.

Keeping the ADA strong

Director of Government Affairs **Patrisha A. Wright** has held meetings with members of Congress on legislative strategies to restore the ADA civil rights protections that have been reversed by negative Supreme Court decisions. **Arlene Mayerson** and **Silvia Yee** are working with national disability coalitions to draft new legislative language for defining disability in the ADA.

California Supreme Court victory

Attorney **Linda D. Kilb** argued *Colmenares v. Braemar Country Club, Inc.* before the California Supreme Court—the first case involving the definition of physical disability that the state high court has heard in a decade. The Court ruled that whereas federal law covers those whose impairments “substantially limit” major life activities, California law requires that the impairment merely “limit” activities. Thus California law protects people with disabilities more broadly than does the federal ADA. DREDF joined with the Los Angeles **Law Offices of Joseph M. Lovretovich** in this case.

Fighting for school accountability

During reauthorization of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, the DREDF **Rapid Response Network (RRN)** provided more than 3,000 parents and advocates in all 50 states with 38 in-depth issue analyses, Congressional hearing summaries, talking points for Hill visits, and sample letters. In May, **Arlene Mayerson** testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Mayerson and **Patrisha A. Wright** worked with social justice groups to educate members of Congress on the damage legislative change could do to civil rights protections for children with disabilities. During the summer, Director of Communications **Julia Epstein** helped organize several rallies to protest proposed changes, and Parent Advocate **Wendy Byrnes** spoke at a June rally in Washington, DC.

Community-based services for people with disabilities

A settlement awaits judicial approval in a lawsuit against the City and County of San Francisco and the State of California for unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities in San Francisco’s **Laguna Honda Hospital** (*Davis, et al. v. CHHS, et al.*). The city has pledged to revamp case management systems, start a Community Advisory Committee, establish a Community Resource Center, and provide Laguna Honda residents with Peer Mentors in the community. Litigation will then resume on the availability of community-based living options in San Francisco.

Voting access for people with disabilities

With a grant from the **David Bohnett Foundation**, **Mary Lou Breslin** is working with **Lutheran Volunteer Corps** Intern **Gretchen Godfrey** and technology consultant **Scott Luebking** to ensure that voters with disabilities in California are included as counties move from old-style paper punch cards to alternative technology-based ballots. DREDF’s “Guide to Voting Equipment Usability and Accessibility” provides information and tools to support increased access to voting systems and the electoral process. (Read the guide at www.dredf.org/Voting_intro.html)

**DISABILITY RIGHTS
EDUCATION AND
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SEASON’S GREETINGS and THANKS to our donors, volunteers, Board, and Development Partners for helping us defend disability civil rights.

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supports DREDF's
policy advocacy on
IDEA and the ADA.

DREDF around the world

Senior Policy Advisor **Mary Lou Breslin** and **Silvia Yee** are building an Internet-based Clearinghouse for International Disability Rights Law and Policy with seed funding from the **Mertz Gilmore Foundation**. The Clearinghouse will enable disability rights leaders around the world to collaborate on meaningful human rights protections for people with disabilities. With the US leading efforts to rebuild Iraq, DREDF has worked on guarantees that foreign aid appropriations include physical and programmatic access for people with disabilities.

Policy Analyst **Marilyn Golden** spoke in Germany on disability equal rights and discrimination and in Italy at the European Disability Forum. Parent Advocacy Program Assistant **Rachel Krokus** attended a Mobility International USA (MIUSA) US/Japan Disability Exchange Program on cross-cultural disability rights. **Silvia Yee** attended a conference on disability rights at the University of Leeds, England. **Patrisha A. Wright** participated in the MIUSA Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability.

Settlement for East Palo Alto students with disabilities

DREDF represents schoolchildren with disabilities in *Emma C. v. Delaine Eastin*, a lawsuit concerning failures to serve children with disabilities by the East Palo Alto Ravenswood City Unified School District and the California Department of Education (CDE). Following years of litigation, **Arlene Mayerson** and Attorney **Larisa Cummings**, with co-counsel **William Koski** of Stanford University's **Youth and Education Law Project**, **Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati**, and **Rony Sagy**, have negotiated a court-approved comprehensive remedial plan. Voters in East Palo Alto elected a new pro-child school board dedicated to implementing the decree.

DREDF trains low-income parents and foster families

With grants from **Washington Mutual**, **Kaiser Permanente**, and the **Foundation of the State Bar of California**, Parent Advocates **Wendy Byrnes**, **Eileen Crumm**, and **Sherry Hearne** have trained over 200 parents of children with disabilities in the Bay Area. The trainees are parents who do not speak English, families in the foster care system, grandparents and other relatives, and families in low-income communities and communities of color. The project has brought information and advocacy skills to people who have been left behind in many school districts.

In partnership with the **Center for Accessible Technology** and with a grant from the **SBC Foundation**, DREDF has undertaken a technology-focused training project to support at-risk children with disabilities and their families by helping their guardians participate in their child's education.

Settlement in transportation access case

Linda D. Kilb and the Denver law firm of **Fox & Robertson** settled a lawsuit brought against the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District for failing to announce routes and call out stops, a critical function for riders with vision impairments. Santa Cruz Metro will install "talking technology" equipment—which automatically announces bus stops and bus routes—on its buses.

Additional DREDF staff activities

Arlene Mayerson spoke at the inaugural conference of the American Constitution Society (ACS) in Washington, DC. Managing Director **Susan Henderson** and **Julia Epstein** are participating in a California coalition of disability rights and labor movement activists. Henderson and Epstein also sit on the Board of the Ed Roberts Campus (ERC), a project of nine Bay Area disability agencies collaborating to bring their organizations under one universally designed roof at a public transit hub.

The conscientious efforts of everyone at DREDF make our work possible. Thanks to: **Aram Antaramian, Nicolie Bolster, Heather Cassidy, Sara Hadsell, Susan Hauser, Cheri Lorenz, Dave Madan, Kristan Mayer, Krista Miller, Hongyu Min, Dave Nold, Don Nicodemus, Matt Shultz, Daniel Tinker, Newsha Firoozye Smith, Silma Smith, Kaaren Vlug, and Jessica Young.**

