#ATRA in Action

February 2026 Advocacy & Legislative Update

Introduction

ATRA's advocacy activities are focused on bills, actions, or issues that directly impact the profession of recreational therapy or people with disabilities. ATRA responds to issues in a non-partisan manner to advocate and protect the recreational therapy profession and people served by recreational therapists.

Action Alerts - Please Take Action!

1. In the revised lawsuit about Section 504 of the Rehab Act, nine states (Alaska, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, South Dakota, and Texas) are seeking to block key aspects of Section 504 as unconstitutional. Texas vs. Kennedy states that aspects of Section 504 related to community living and community integration for people with disabilities are unconstitutional.

- At stake is the integration mandate that codifies the right of disabled people to live in their community with needed supports. Individuals within the disability community are concerned about the implications of this lawsuit if these aspects of Section 504 are found to be unconstitutional, as it relates to institutionalization of people with disabilities.
- An action alert will be released soon to recreational therapists in the nine states

Advocacy Activities

| Postings on ATRA Connect Advocacy & Legislative page on US Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs – Veterans Healing through Adaptive Sports, budget cuts related to Idaho Office of Special Education, Department of Education (DOE) definition of "Professional" related to Graduate Student loans, DOE dismantling and interoffice agreements

| Postings on ATRA Connect Older Adult Special Interest Group postings on New Community of Practice Focused on Evaluating Programs on Social Connection, ACL Commit to Connect session on Friendshipworks, webinar on food insecurity and people with dementia, Program for All Inclusive Care of the Elderly 2025 review, ACL Commit to Connect seeking applicants on community of practice evaluating chronic disease impact

| Review of Executive Order "White House Great American Recovery Initiative" focused on addressing addiction but no impact on recreational therapy at this point

| Review of Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on Department of Education/Office of Special Education which explained the costs of paid administration leaves for the Office for Civil Rights in DOE that took place due to the layoffs/terminations made by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in March through September 2025 – a cost of $18 – 24 million, plus an addition $10.5 – 14 million from September to December 2025. The report found that the DOE did not evaluate potential costs or savings, nor did it document any analyses, prior to these administrative leaves. From the GAO summary, "(DO)Education lacks reasonable assurance that its actions achieved the stated goal of reforming its federal workforce to maximize efficiency and productivity, including whether such actions improved service to the American people, increased productivity, or saved taxpayer dollars."

| Review of Federal Registrar for response to comments on Department of Education on Final Priority and Definitions with a focus on students with disabilities (SWD)

ATRA Board of Directors: Nancy Nisbett, President; Ashley Bowen, President-Elect; Tameka Battle, Immediate Past-President; Amina Abdallah, Treasurer; Chelsea Farrington, Secretary; Members at Large: Jackson, Amburn, Cliff Burnham, Jasmine Edwards, Sofie Rodriguez

#ATRA in Action

February 2026 Advocacy & Legislative Update

Meetings

| Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation (CPR) Annual Meeting February 3
| Disability Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC) Annual Meeting February 9
| Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities – Developmental Disabilities, Autism Task Force meeting
| Webinar on Texas vs. Kennedy/Section 504 Lawsuit
| ATRA Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Meeting
| ATRA Social Prescribing Task Force Meeting

What We Are Watching

| Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel – Reporting Requirements for Disability-Related Complaints
| Section 504 Rehabilitation Act lawsuit
| Healthcare affordability, including ACA tax credits and marketplace changes with specific attention on the impact to people with disabilities
| Medicaid changes at state level
| The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) support for community-based mental health and substance abuse programs
| Social Prescribing

Sign On Letters During February

| Sign on Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) letter regarding the Health and Human Services Health Sector Artificial Intelligence Requests for Information – ATRA did not send its own letter due to a lack of responses for feedback from recreational therapists
| Sign on CCD Long-Term Services and Supports Task Force letter regarding home and community-based waivers included in HR 1
| Sign on Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation (CPR) letter on concerns related to modifying the definition of professional degrees and caps on federal student loans
| Sign on CPR letter for support of HR 5940/S 3480, Seniors Deserve Streamlined Medical Approvals for Timely, Efficient, Recovery (SMARTER) Care Act (link for January letter)
| Sign on ITEM Coalition letter supporting S3138, The Veterans Supporting Prosthetics Opportunities and Recreational Therapy ("SPORT") Act (January sign on letter)
| Sign on ITEM Coalition letter H.R. 6835, the Veterans Spinal Trauma Access to New Devices (STAND) Act of 2025 (January sign on letter)

Thank You

Thank you and special shout out to **Lizzie Terry** (CCD) for representing ATRA at coalition meetings.

818 18th St. NW, Suite 810 #7369 | Washington, DC 20006 | Tel. 857.776.2872 | info@atra-online.com

Instagram Facebook LinkedIn @ATRAinAction

ATRA Board of Directors: Nancy Nisbett, President; Ashley Bowen, President-Elect; Tameka Battle, Immediate Past-President; Amina Abdallah, Treasurer; Chelsea Farrington, Secretary; Members at Large: Jackson, Amburn, Cliff Burnham, Jasmine Edwards, Sofie Rodriguez