



ATRA in Action – July 2025

Advocacy and 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!

- July and August are often quiet months in legislative activities. Speaker Johnson sent members of the House home a few days early for summer break. This is an **excellent time for recreational therapists to reach out to their legislators while they are in their home districts**. ATRA encourages you to attend a town hall meeting or schedule a one-on-one or group meeting with other RTs and your representatives/senators. To find your legislators, go [HERE](#).

Advocacy Activities

- **A HUGE win for Veterans and Recreational and Creative Arts Therapists working at the Department of Veterans Affairs.** Recreational and Creative Arts Therapies were added to the [VA list of Exempt from Hiring Freeze dated June 26, 2025](#), and available publicly in July. Thank you to all who contacted their legislators and the VA to express their concerns about these cuts and their impact on veterans.
- ATRA nominated Dr. Bryan McCormick to the **Advisory Committee to the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**. Dr. McCormick, a professor at Temple University, is a distinguished academician, clinician, and researcher in mental health, psychosocial rehabilitation, recreational therapy, and public health.
- CMS has released responses to their request for comments [for the Medicare Prospective Payment System for Skilled Nursing Facilities for FY2026](#). Only one of ATRA's comments was addressed in the released document, specific to the proposed

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well-being quality measure (pp. 88-90 of the document). To see ATRA's submitted comments, go [HERE](#).

What We Are Watching

- The [Senate Appropriations Committee approved its 2026 fiscal spending bill, including funding the National Institutes of Health budget and research priorities](#), and not to consolidate NIH Centers down to eight as was recommended. This is a win for healthcare, disability, and public health research. This also included funding for IDEA and the Special Olympics Sport and Empowerment Act of 2004.
- CMS Responses to 2026 Fiscal Year Prospective Payment System comments for Hospice, Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities, and Inpatient Rehabilitation Facilities.
- The Supreme Court approved the dismantling of the Department of Education. ATRA will monitor what this means for children and adolescents with disabilities, as well as recreational therapists working in the schools.
- The impact on people with disabilities with Department of Health and Human Services layoffs in mid-July, particularly at the Administration on Community Living and National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation (NIDILR).
- Roll out of cuts approved by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 2025 (OBRA '25).
- Proposed rollback of federal disability protections by the Department of Energy. This was supposed to occur in July but was delayed.

Sign-On Letters During July

- [Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation \(CPR\) letter supporting S1816/HR3514](#), the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act, dated July 8, 2025
- [Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities \(CCD\) letter to the House to fund the Assistive Technology Act](#) dated July 11, 2025
- [CCD letter to Senate to fund the Assistive Technology Act](#) dated July 11, 2025
- CCD Letter about Department of Education, specifically the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), dated July 14, 2025

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Resources

- CMS Responses to [2026 Fiscal Year Prospective Payment System comments for Skilled Nursing Facilities](#) (released July 31, 2025)
- Resource on implementation dates regarding the [Budget Reconciliation Act of 2025](#)
- Resource on implementation dates specific to [Medicaid and OBRA 2025](#)

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