RESPECTABILITY

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The conference is now started. This conference is now being recorded.

Hello and welcome to our conference call. This is Jennifer. Founder and president of Respectability a nonprofit organization working to enable people with disabilities to be able to achieve the American dream. This webinar and call is focusing on the 2016 presidential campaign elections. And how people with disabilities and people who care about people with disabilities, can really make a difference during the campaign cycle. I'm really quite delighted that we have so many people on the call and that we have such a tremendous leader who is a spear-heading this initiative for us. Her name is Lauren and Lauren came to us after a lot of experience in strategic communications and also in working in journalism and in politics and public policy. Again, respectability is a nonprofit organization we are nonpartisan which means that we will not be endorsing any presidential candidate.

Our goal is to simply educate the public and to enable, in particular, people with disabilities to have the ability to ask candidates key questions that impact our community and to get those questions answered. Our team is made up of people who themselves have disabilities and deep expertise on disability issues.

This is a photo of our team, or parts of our team, and you will see that in the orange blazer is Lauren Applebaum who came to us after getting a master's degree in journalism. She did her undergrad in journalism. She worked for NBC news where she worked on a number of things for Chuck Todd at Meet the Press and the TODAY Show and many other shows. I am Jennifer and I'm in red in the picture but I want to also really point out a couple key people. In the front row you see our fellowship director Randy who is a wheelchair user on the right who did his undergrad at Cornell. His graduate work at Yale. We have Justin Chappell and we have Ben Spangenberg who are in the front and also wheelchair users. Incredibly talented people who have been in Iowa as in the back row you see a gentleman in a blue shirt and yellow tie. He is on the autism spectrum and self‑identifies. Our team has a lot of experience on disability issues. I, myself, am a person with disability. I'm highly dyslexic and we want to be sure that the wide and full range of disability issues is addressed in this 2016 cycle. So Lauren Appelbaum directs this program. She is very, very talented and so I'm now turning it over to her to lead us in this webinar.

Thank you very much, Jennifer. I am very grateful that you're taking time out of your day to join us and for those of you in the east coast digging out of the snow hopefully you're somewhere warm. I'd like to share some information. Respectability, we don't just say, hey, we're going to talk about X, Y, and Z because we feel that we want to talk about that. We really spend the time and figure out what it is that people are talking about and what messages work. So back in 2012 we started doing some polling and I'm going to give you a quick overview of some poll results on some different messages that worked and such so you can kind of understand where we're coming from. So in 2012 in a poll of a thousand likely voters we found out that the majority of likely voters know someone with a disability which is not surprising when you think about how many people of the 50‑60 million Americans have disabilities and we learn that it can be a voting issue. That there was a significant response to congressional candidates who supported programs for those with disability. And so like I said more than half of Americans, these likely voters know someone with a disability. And this is, you know, not just, you know, their neighbor down the street but a family member or a close friend.

We then repeated a similar poll in 2014 and found out that 56% of these likely voters said that they, a family member, or a close friend has a disability and now were very careful in everything we do to be completely nonpartisan so we had a democrat and republican pollster on this poll and we had someone say the issues of employment among people with disabilities can affect outcomes in competitive races for senate and governor. A public pollster said we are accustomed to thinking about soccer moms, Hispanics or valued voters but this poll shows that Americans with disabilities are a demographic we need to pay attention to in the future and the last cycle we did not hear the word disability at rallies, town halls, conventions.

There weren't disability platforms like you would find in other places but then from doing this poll in 2014 we could see that the disability community could be one of these communities that should be addressed by the presidential candidates as well as senate and governor candidates but also that the community can really help swing an election. Disability touches more than half of the electorate. And this next slide it shows that it really spans partisanship. You have 56% of democrats, 58% of independents and 56% of republicans so really does not matter if you're a democrat, if you're a republican, if you're a moderate. It effects everyone in America so in this 2014 election following the election, we found that swing voters and senate and governor races are more likely to vote for someone with disabilities and become more independent. This is something I talk to when I talk to campaign staffers I push this a lot is that people who have a disability themselves where much more enthusiastic and likely to go out and vote and so if you see in 2014 the levels of interest was 56% across the general American population. Both people with disabilities was 66%. And so by showing, by telling candidates and their staffers that the disability community is much more energized it shows that people with disability, they're more likely to come out and actually vote and so it makes sense to be reaching out to our demographic.

Now we wanted to know what it is that disability voters really care about. And so if you look here and I'm going to bring up a pointer to help. The average 2014 voter their position was on the economy, jobs, and wages and the disability community was the same thing and even by a higher margin for the second one which was new health care. Which was the new health care law. So we know that the disability community cares very much about economy, jobs and wages. So what does this mean for 2016? One in five Americans have a disability themselves. It's 20% of the American populous. 56 million Americans make us the largest minority group in America. People talk about Hispanics or African Americans and not realizing that people with disabilities is the largest minority group. So that means if people with disabilities get out and vote it can really swing an election.

On the next slide you'll see graphic that talks about the first four states. And so we have been paying attention in this cycle to Iowa, South Carolina, Nevada and New Hampshire because that's where the candidates have been spending their time. After Iowa and New Hampshire we may see candidates drop out. We've had several meets in Iowa and New Hampshire and showing what it means in these specific states. For example more than 300,000 people with disabilities live in Iowa. We also then take the rate of people with disabilities who are employed and compare that to people without disabilities and to show the difference here. And this is actually something that we printed out and have taken with us on the trail which I'm going to be talking about momentarily in Iowa and New Hampshire to share with their campaigns and staffers. So as I mentioned, we are busy and I just threw up a few pictures of myself out on the trail. I have to say that members of my team have been doing much more of this than me. I am so proud. There is a piece in the Atlantic that profiles four of our fellows out on the campaign trail and we'll send that out to everyone who RSVP'd for the call. It shows how these folks spent time, some of them during their break during grad school and during their break from jobs to go out and be on the trail and to really be making a difference. It's very vital to get all the candidates on both sides of the aisle to speak about specific plans for a better future and you'll see some pictures here. We have basically-- we are reaching out to all candidates on both sides of the aisle. This is Justin here interviewing Bernie Sanders in Iowa in November. Justin who asked O'Malley a question in December. And then our team members Ryan and Justin taking a selfie with Hillary Clinton in Iowa in January.

So we're pretty much everywhere and like I said we are very active with the republicans as well. We've reached out to 100% of the candidates on both sides of the aisle. I don't have space to show all the republicans. But we have Donald Trump, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz. So what have been we have been doing? We've been going to the states and holding briefings where we invited the state directors and other members of the team to come and join us.

You'll see back in November we had a meeting in Iowa. This was our third meeting and we had members of the Sanders, Bush, O'Malley and Clinton campaigns join us. We met with thirty disability leaders in Iowa and we sat down and had breakfast for a while and we invited all the campaigns to join us where everyone in the community was able to talk about the issues of importance. And then most recently we had a meeting in New Hampshire and that's a picture of myself speaking with Stephanie Carlton a senior advisor with the Bush campaign. She flew up for this campaign as it was taking more interest in disability issues.

While we're on the road we are actively covering debates. We are able to get press credentials for things like debates. And then we turn around and interview the candidates. You can see our president interviewing Jeb Bush at an event where we were able to on the sidelines of another event in DC ask the candidate to come join us to talk about these issues slightly more in depth which all the videos have been posted to our YouTube channel and shared on our respectability report.

And then while we're out there as I mentioned to you, I told you about the Atlantic piece. We have been active in telling journalists you'll see there's a Bloomberg reporter talking to James about his experiences on the trail and now one interesting story is that while some of our fellows may personally be interested in a candidate or a party they've learned how to be nonpartisan while out on the trail talking about issues because this is a nonpartisan issue and if it were to be a partisan issue we would all lose but while out there we are busy talking to the press encouraging them to cover these issues and explaining to them what it is that we're doing. So what can you do?

One, get informed. I mentioned The Respectability Report. It's a non-partisan political commentary with a focus on disability issues. We will never rate or endorse a candidate but provide fact-based analysis from a staff based around the entire country. One thing that we are working on and we will be releasing some results this week is our PWDS vote 2016 campaign scorecard. We reached out to 100% of the campaigns with a list of 16 questions that we collaborated with several other disability organizations in DC, Iowa and elsewhere to talk about housing, transportation, veteran's issues, you named it hopefully we covered it and we've asked these candidates, the campaigns to respond to all of this. Not just by giving us answers but by posting it on their websites so that anyone searching for different issues will see that the disability community is one of the categories that the campaigns are reaching out to and we want to be included just like if people are talking about African Americans or minorities or any other minority that people with disabilities is included in that group.

So can you do this stuff? Of course you can. Anyone with a smart phone, an iPad or a friend with one of those can go to an event and ask a candidate to talk about an issue. You'll see here this is our fellow Justin Chappel interviewing Bernie Sanders and he's sitting in a wheelchair and recording the answer. This is something that we welcome everyone in the community to do the more that ask a candidate about the issue the more he or she will create a real policy. We asked debate moderators and journalists from the main network what will it take for you to cover these issues and their response is always are the same. They say we need people to go to events, town halls, ask the candidates these questions. The candidates will continue answering these questions the more often they are asked it the more likely they will to put it in their stump speech. The more candidates talk about then the journalists will start paying attention and as the journalists start paying attention there'll be more questions asked at events and debates and then it will be paid more attention to by the national everyday American who can then learn about the importance of these issues and then we know it's not easy to attend an event. If you're based in Iowa or New Hampshire you're probably already going to events. If you're based somewhere else in the country, maybe the candidates aren't in your area. But we're here to help you do this work. We're working with a woman in Minnesota who had been or has been traveling down to Iowa and she's been asking questions and we know it's not easy so we're willing to help pay for gas. You know, and things like that and every time that you get a successful interview on a video ‑‑ that is usable that we can share on The Respectability Report we will give you a stipend for that. And I can give you more information about that. At the end you can jot down my e‑mail address right now. I'd love to be working with all of you around the country to make this continue to happen. So we're going to be in Manchester, New Hampshire from February 1‑10. A team of seven of us throughout this period of time will be in and out and based in New Hampshire. Why is this important? On Monday, February 1st, people pass the first vote for the Iowa caucus and nine days later will be the New Hampshire primary so between the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary near all the candidates will spend all their time there so we could have two to three hundred events during that time period in New Hampshire so while we have six of us or so in New Hampshire we can't be everywhere so if you want to come out there and help us and do this we'd be very grateful for that. If you're based in New Hampshire or Massachusetts and can drive on over, you know, we're glad to have you on our team. If you're in New Hampshire but maybe you don't want to drive we have rental cars. We'll pick you up. If you want information about our hotels and all of that you can e‑mail me and I will work with you to help make this all happen.

I've listed some other important dates. So you'll see also in February we'll have the Nevada caucus and the South Carolina primary and then on Tuesday the 1st is super Tuesday where people will be voting in fifteen different locations. So why is this important? Because after the first four states candidates are everywhere, all around the country, so we will never have this opportunity again during this election to have all the candidates in one place that is geographically easy for us to be driving from place to place to cover all these candidates. What happens once everyone is all over the states? That's where you can certainly play a role that if you haven't been able to join us in Iowa or New Hampshire but now the candidates are coming to your neighborhood you can go out there and press them on these issues because it could be a long haul in both the democrat and republican cycles where people might not drop out for a long time. If we keep pressing on these issues we will have success. What about if you're like I can't get out. It's easier for me to do something. Have you heard of armchair activism? With social media now you can become an easy activist where you don't have to get out of your seat. We invite you to join our social media team if you're active on Facebook, twitter or another platform. We try to send out a lot of e‑mails but not too many so if you're interested in receiving social media updates -- things that you can copy and paste and share, sign up for our social media team and I can send you these updates. Write an op‑ed or letter to the editor. Personal insights can be very powerful. If you're based in one of these early states you'll have a better chance to get it published. We have ‑‑ we did a webinar about this and so you can watch that to learn everything that you'd like to know and once again if you have any questions about this you're going to have a chance to ask them when I finish speaking shortly or you can e‑mail me to know.

Host a debate watching party. Invite your friends to come over and talk about these issues. During the debate we encourage you to tweet the candidates and their staff. Just because you're not the debate moderator doesn't mean you can't reach out and ask the candidates your questions. So I'm going to talk a little bit about twitter. If you're not on twitter that's okay. Bear with me. We'll get to something in a moment but I wanted ‑‑ we need to spend some time and we looked ‑‑ and we created lists of influential people. The presidential candidates. The 2016 presidential campaign staffers and the most influential journalists. You can tweet the candidates and I recommend don't just tweet the people you support but all of them and their staff as well. You could find that candidate A's New Hampshire state director is really interested in these issues and retweet it. It's a great way to make sure they see the materials and disability rights is not a partisan issue. So I've given you a few sample tweets. For example, you know, at the presidential candidate or staff member people with disabilities are our nation's largest minority group. We use the hashtag PWDS vote. And so by doing that, we're able to kind of have them all in one place and people can click on it and see all the other tweets that people are using with this hashtag.

We also have one other issue that we're doing is why is a website not accessible for everyone. Why aren't their captions like you can see on this webinar? We will tweet political journalists why aren't presidential candidates talking about disabilities? We're the largest minority group in the U.S. This is just a few sample tweets. I can send you hundreds if you're interested. Most importantly, register to vote. We can't ‑‑ you can't necessarily make a difference if you don't actually go and vote. And quickly I want to talk about voting place accessibility. In 2008 only 27% of voting places were accessible. With not being able to get into the door or if there's snow and you can't get to the location because they didn't pave the parking lot. And one thing we're working on right now with our partners in Iowa is that not all of the Iowa caucus locations are accessible. Private homes, churches are not bound by Americans with Disabilities Act regulations so working with the democrat and republican parties to ensure that people have access to attend the caucus and vote for the person they want to vote for. So here are a few resources that could be of interest to you. And I believe we will send out this PowerPoint to everyone who RSVP'd so you can see all this information as well.

I want to thank all of you for joining us today and now we'll open it for questions you may have.

Operator, if you can explain to people how they can ask questions.

Thanks, Jennifer, ladies and gentlemen, you can ask questions via the chat window located in the lower left corner or you can press seven and the hash key on your phone to queue up for verbal questions.

Well, Lauren is getting caught up on all the questions to read that I've had a chance to read mostly from Texas, she's been sending us a lot of questions she has for presidential candidates. Very important questions. Sorry?

I don't have any questions. So ‑‑ where are the questions that have been sent?

On the left side of the screen there's a chart.

Okay.

And so Arielle has been asking about a number of policy issues including student loans for example. Arielle my advice to you is that you start tweeting at the candidate. Earlier we showed you that you have a number of lists and you'll get this PowerPoint. I'm going to go back a couple of pages and show you that when you go and tweet if you're on twitter and you can do this on Facebook, there are these lists and you'll go to this PowerPoint that we're sending you and we'll send it to everyone on this call and you can just click on the blue that says presidential candidate and up will pop all the twitter hashtags ‑‑ twitter addresses for all the candidates and you should send your question to each of these candidates. It's about 16 candidates. If you have more time than just sending sixteen tweets you can definitely do that with the presidential campaign staffers and the most important journalists. But also keep in mind these big events like tonight we have an event I believe it's CNN who is hosting the democrat candidates at a town hall meeting so you can tweet at the anchors and ask them questions about this tonight because if they ask them on national television obviously it'll get a lot more exposure.

Lauren, I don't know if you're seeing the questions but I'll read out loud what she asked. Candidates need to be addressed by PWDS with handicapped licensing, parking, over access aisles all over the world. Can you talk about how that played a role?

With Hillary Clinton?

Yes.

Way back in the early part of the 2016 campaign in April, Hillary Clinton's campaign van parked in a handicapped parking spot and some media picked it up and thought this wasn't the best thing to do. She's not leading by example and so we at Respectability, I wasn't here yet but we pushed that out as a story saying that someone in her stature should be leading by example and not block a handicapped parking spot. We since then we have met with the campaign several times, talked with the candidate herself and she has now a disability platform on her website and started talking about the issues on the campaign trail including addressing autism in depth. When there is an issue like this, we really do take it strongly and go to the candidates and their campaigns and try to educate them on the importance of this also in this we have been working with the folks in Iowa to make sure their parking lots are clear and especially the handicapped parking spots are open for when people arrive to caucus and the same thing in New Hampshire when people arrive for the primary that these elections that are occurring during wintertime when snow is a probability to ensure that people who need the parking spots up front have access to them.

Can you explain, operator, can get in the queue if they are on the telephone.?

If you have called in please press seven followed by the hash key or the pound sign on the phone now to be released to present your question.

So that's 7 and the hashtag. Christina says Lauren ‑‑ asks Lauren about people who were deaf or hard of hearing and how those issues are impacting the campaign and whether those voters are being underrepresented so can you address the issues regarding people who have hearing or vision differences?

Yes.

So this is something that we have pressed the campaigns on since the beginning. We've been pushing specifically with their websites to make sure that they are more accessible. A lot of campaigns post videos on Facebook and YouTube and Vimeo. All three platforms allow for people to add captions and allow you to do so for free.

Now YouTube offers a thing where you can just kind of click the CC button and will try to catch everything. I'm sure you've found some inaccuracies and the same with YouTube to a higher extent. So we work with the campaigns to go in by hand and actually go and put in the correct captions. Now while almost ‑‑ all of the campaigns have some of their videos with captions, none of the campaigns have 100% of their videos with captions with actual accurate handwritten captions versus just using the YouTube auto correct. So we have been pushing there, in addition, we have been educating the campaign about ensuring that their websites are screen reader accessible for people who need that and then we talked a lot about events accessibility about having seating for people with wheelchairs and ensuring that people with wheelchairs are able to arrive and get to that seating without an issue and something that's come up recently as we've been working with a family in Iowa with a teenage son with autism who was asking for seating that wasn't necessarily in a crowd because everyone knows that with a variety of disabilities in terms of look for a different situation. And so explaining to the campaigns that people need a little bit more space and campaigns can be a little more crowded that even if you're not in a wheelchair there's another reason that someone would want to sit in the ADA section and we've also been talking about the importance of ASL interpreters and we are happy to notice that at Hillary's and Bernie Sander's there's been interpreters. We were talking about these issues in Las Vegas and a representative from the Hillary Clinton campaign said we're having a debate watching party tonight and we said you're going to have an ASL interpreter? Turns out they had one and shared that with the community and then there was a group of people who needed the interpreter there and when Hillary Clinton walked into the room she walked over to them first signing I love you and while that's just a gesture it doesn't necessarily mean much it is the fact that they now have an ASL interpreter at almost every single one of their events is something that we find so important and something that we've talked to all the campaigns about. Some of the smaller campaigns don't have the time to do everything but we explain to them what they can do for free and lease expensively and time‑consuming.

We've talked to the Donald Trump campaign which doesn't necessarily have to worry about money about having captions and CART at their big rallies for people who would like that. So we really are pushing it from all different ways and you would also I think ask about being underrepresented. So we ‑‑ in talking to the campaigns we have talked about the importance of addressing people of all abilities on their platforms so if they're talking about jobs for example to, you know, include the phrase of people of all abilities to kind of include everyone and to not necessarily just have a separate platform about people with disabilities but to also, you know, include people with disabilities that every single platform that they're doing on jobs, on education, on health care, you know, that we are a community that can be included in every single platform that they are working on. And I would encourage you to become more involved and one way you can do that is by attending these events and when you go to attend an event to let people know what you need. We've been very happy to see that on Jeb Bush's RSVP forms there's a box that says do you need any accommodations? To date we have not seen that on any other candidates RSVP forms. It could exist but we have not seen it so that's something else that we ask the other campaigns to do to ask at events what accommodations people need and they may not be able to get all the accommodations especially if it's right before it starts but even having this as an option for people to ask this the campaigns are starting to get it and realizing what it is and how it's not difficult to accommodate people of all abilities.

Thank you, Lauren. Operator, are there any people on the phone who have a question who've done that star ‑‑ the 7 hashtag so that they can –

Yes.

 ‑‑ answer their questions.

Yeah, we have a question from Ramsey Lee.

Great. Ramsey, go right ahead. You are now live. Ramsey, your phone might be muted.
Thank you for helping me. Do you know if the candidates are coming through ‑‑

The candidates are coming where?

To Wisconsin.

Wisconsin, is that what you said?

Yes, ma'am.

Yes. As of now I'm not sure. But it's something that I can look up and get you that information. I am just looking up when the Wisconsin will be ‑‑ when the Wisconsin primary is. I do not have them all memorized. So the Wisconsin primary will be held on April 5th. So it is likely that they unfortunately will not be coming to your state until at least March although there might be a few events here or there.

Okay. Do you know if they're coming to Minnesota anytime soon?

Possibly. I actually heard that Hillary Clinton is coming to Minnesota this week. I will follow up with you via e‑mail with the candidates ‑‑ with some information where you can find this information.

We have had some people have other states go to Iowa and we're hoping people will join us for the states that are given that are the key nonpartisan New Hampshire. You have 100% of the candidates there from this stretch of time from the caucus to the primary so literally there'll be more than 200 different events happening over a ten-day period of time, all of them free so that all you need is to join us. We're going to be staying at an inexpensive hotel. We'll have rental cars. You can join our team so you don't have to go out by yourself. You can join our teams. We'll have multiple teams going around to different candidate events where you can ask questions and we'd be delighted to have people join us.

Operator, are there any more questions that are on the phone?

Before that, Ramsey, I just want to say that there are people, there are candidates who are ‑‑ will be in Iowa close to the Wisconsin border between now and February 1st. The Des Moines register has the Iowa caucus chapter and you can see where all the candidates will be in Iowa through the caucus and you can see if there are any that are going to be near the Wisconsin border if you'd be interested in driving over.

Operator, were there any questions?

No other questions on queue. Again, as a reminder. Please press seven followed by the hash key to follow up with further questions. [Pause].

So this is Jennifer again and I just want to thank everyone for joining us and to remind everybody how much you can make a difference. We're hoping that you will tweet out to the candidates and join us in Iowa and New Hampshire. We'll have a team of 7 people in New Hampshire for the ten day period of time. We'd like to have help from people willing to do some tweeting on different issues. You can see Lauren's e‑mail address on the screen. Because she can always give you keen information of things to tweet. For example, we did have a question about accessibility for people who were deaf. We have different kinds of fact sheets and backgrounders to explain how to do captions and to do it for free for example that can be tweeted to all the candidates. We're looking for the campaigns to have their disability statements out and to have something on their website by close of business today.

As of now, I know for a fact that we have candidate disability statements from Hillary Clinton, from Jeb Bush, from Senator Sanders and from Senator Rick Santorum. We also see some disability issues from John Kasich on his website already and we're looking to see disability issues from all the campaigns. If you go to The Respectability Report you can see that we covered 100% of the candidates in a nonpartisan way and that we got facts and information on their views on their disability issues from 100% of the candidates. There are huge variances between the different candidates on how they would approach various different issues so I do invite you to take a look at them. All the videos that we have from the candidates and we try whenever possible to videotape them saying whatever they're saying are on our YouTube channel which you can find on YouTube at Respectability USA so if you want to see how the candidates are reacting. It's interesting to me to see when a candidate speaks to someone is in a wheelchair. Sometimes you can see stuff in body language that I think sends some interesting information.

I want to thank those that are on our team who have really spent a lot of time almost living in Iowa and New Hampshire. James, Joseph, Justin, Ben, but also Ryan and Garrett Patterson and Jane who have been on the campaign trail for us. And I want to highlight the new article in today's Atlantic magazine online by a reporter who gives a good flavor of what it's like to be on the campaign trail.

Thank you, Lauren, for everything you're doing. Thank you, everyone, who has joined us on this webinar and thank you Confertel and the captionist for making this accessible to all. Thank you, and if you have any questions the e‑mail is on the screen. We have 56 million Americans with disabilities that need to have a better future. Thank you.

This concludes our call.