

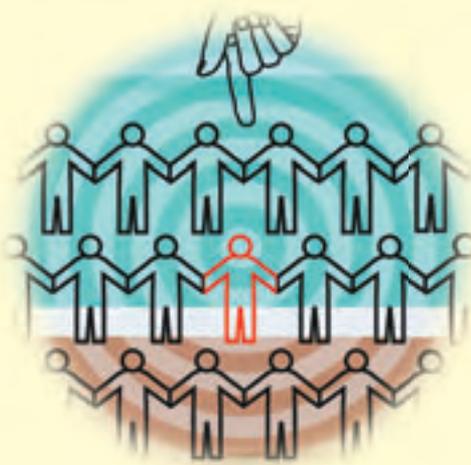
## ■ Activism on the move

MS activists from Washington state to Washington, DC, are mobilizing online to make social and political changes that will be felt by everyone living with MS.

Last November the Society launched an aggressive petition drive to increase federal funding for MS research. It spread widely through mass e-mails, Web stickers (interactive banners that can be added to personal Web sites), podcasts, and blogs. The more than 100,000 signatures collected gave MS activists significant leverage when they discussed the issue on Capitol Hill in March during the Society's 2007 Public Policy Conference.

Online activism helped win several recent victories, including:

- Legislation formally establishing the Depart-



ment of Veterans Affairs' MS Centers of Excellence and effectively protecting their funding for the future;

- Revised Medicare policy allowing physicians to prescribe the proper mobility device and a new reimbursement fee schedule ensuring the supply of powered wheelchairs meets the demand;

- A landmark new respite care law that will eventually authorize \$289 million in state grants over five years, making quality respite care more accessible to family caregivers of people with MS and other health conditions—

regardless of age, disability, or family situation.

## Online activism at the state level

The Society's New York City Chapter recently mobilized MS online activists to keep exiting New York governor George Pataki from changing the Medicaid spousal refusal policy and cutting coverage for people living with MS.

P.J. Weiner, coordinator of Information and Referral for the New York City Chapter, told **InsideMS** that, while there is no substitute for face-to-face visits with representatives, "online advocacy is the quickest, most effective way to reach key decision-makers, especially on time-sensitive issues."

Being an MS activist has never been easier. Explore the new online tools, and sign up at [nationalmssociety.org/advocacy](http://nationalmssociety.org/advocacy).

## ■ Pitching the MS talent pool to employers

A talented employee with MS is first a talented employee. These people have skills and experience that employers value. Does a disability have to get in the way?

To educate employers about MS and to encourage them to hire and keep qualified individuals with the disease, the Society has produced a new 14-minute video: **MS in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers**.

### Seek and keep

Featured on the video are people with MS and employers talking about MS in the workplace, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), disclosure issues, accommodations, and rationales for seeking and keeping employees with MS. The video makes these points:

**1. The bottom line**  
Companies invest in workers through training. Their experi-

ence becomes more valuable over time. Recruiting and training a new employee often costs companies thousands of dollars per person. It makes good bottom-line sense to keep an experienced employee productive.

### 2. Accommodations are affordable

An employee with a disability may need some changes to the work environment to maintain productivity. ADA guidelines require employers with 15 or more employees to provide accommodations. Unfortunately, many

employers have the misconception that accommodations cost a great deal of money. Most cost little or no money—rarely more than \$500. Compared to the cost of hiring and training a new employee, accommodations meet the cost-effective test.

### 3. Workplace diversity has benefits

People with disabilities have learned to be flexible and creative in managing change, and these are valuable assets to employers. These employees may also help their companies market products or ser-

vices to consumers with disabilities. Companies providing accommodations report higher morale and productivity, less absenteeism, and greater employee retention. A humane work culture makes for happier employees all around.

The video, which is available through chapters, also lists resources for employers. To get a copy, call 1-800-344-4867. ■

### Do U IM?

Thanks to a new Society relationship with Microsoft, every single time you have an IM conversation using Windows Live™ Messenger, Microsoft will donate a portion of the program's advertising revenue to the National MS Society. There is no fee for using Messenger, and it only takes a minute to download and select the Society as your organization when you join. Visit [im.live.com](http://im.live.com) for more details and to sign up. Join the movement.

