

## Advocacy Organizations Object to Gates at Arkansas State Capitol on Weekends

Little Rock, Arkansas – Disability Rights Arkansas, Inc. (DRA) and Arkansas State Independent Living Council (ARSILC) are concerned over the Secretary of State’s plan to use gates at the State Capitol to block entrances on weekends.

The decision by the Secretary of State to limit entrances to the State Capitol on weekends prevents individuals with disabilities from accessing parking on the Capitol grounds. The only accessible parking spaces near the Capitol are located in the front of the Capitol (south of the tunnel) and five spaces in the back of the building. Once the gates are closed, there will be no accessible parking near the Capitol for individuals to access the building.

“We are calling upon the Secretary of State to meet with disability advocates to develop a solution that will encourage Arkansans with disabilities to visit the Capitol over the weekends, not exclude them,” says Tom Masseau, executive director of Disability Rights Arkansas. “When a decision is made that limits access to public facilities, Arkansans with disabilities need to be at the table to ensure that solutions are in place to allow full access to the building.”

“While we understand that the concept of installing a gate at the State Capitol on weekends is being made for security, we implore Secretary Martin to schedule a meeting with advocates to discuss this idea and identify solutions so ALL Arkansans can enjoy the State Capitol,” says Sha Stephens, executive director of ARSILC.

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**DISABILITY RIGHTS ARKANSAS (DRA)** is a private, nonprofit agency with offices in Little Rock, Arkansas. Since 1977, the Governor of Arkansas has designated DRA the independent Protection and Advocacy system for persons with disabilities in Arkansas. DRA operates under authority outlined in federal law, is funded primarily through federal grants and is governed by a Board of Directors. DRA collaborates with other disability rights and civil rights organizations and agencies, the private bar and legal services to accomplish its goals and objectives.

The Arkansas State Independent Living Council is a non-profit organization promoting independent living for people with disabilities. The Arkansas State Independent Living Council is an education, advocacy, and referral agency that work to provide information to the public throughout the state about the Independent Living Philosophy, civil rights, technology and services.