



Center for the Human Rights of
Users and Survivors of Psychiatry



PsychRights®
Law Project for
Psychiatric Rights, Inc.



Repeal Mental Health Laws

Documenting and challenging forced psychiatric treatment

January 14, 2013

Vice President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20501
Fax #: 202-452-2461

Grass Roots Disability Organizations Say “Nothing About Us Without Us!”

Vice President Biden,

When will you hold meetings with people labeled with psychiatric disabilities, including broad-based town meeting formats and teleconferences that allow everyone to participate, to hear from us about refusing disability profiling as a fear-based response to gun violence?

You are holding high-profile meetings with the NRA and with victims of gun violence. Nothing is said about meeting with the community of people labeled with psychiatric disabilities (“mental illness”), autistic people, or others who are affected by being stereotyped as prone to violence.

We are aware of one such meeting that took place without media coverage; it is not enough. People labeled with psychiatric disabilities have a lot to say and many perspectives to offer, and this letter is a beginning.

We are concerned that your proposals will negatively affect our community: that there will be a bipartisan agreement to scapegoat the disability community by increasing restrictions on civil liberties and gun-ownership privileges of people labeled with mental illness. And that there will be measures labeled as “early identification and intervention” and “access to mental health services” that really mean committing more people to institutions, involuntary referrals,

misleading screening, labeling and pushing the same psychiatric drugs that have figured in countless suicides and in many of the acts of mass gun violence.

We strongly urge you to:

- Reject disability profiling of any kind, and reject any profiling of individuals as “dangerous,” particularly when based on psychiatric or psychological assessment of behavior, because profiling is inherently unreliable, discriminatory and divisive.
- Reject Section 103 of the “Fix Gun Checks” Act of 2011 (S. 436) or any other expansion of the NCIC database or involvement of educators in risk assessment. Dismantle the mental health component of the database since it has no rational relation to prediction of violent behavior.
- Reject any expansion of psychiatric inpatient or outpatient commitment and begin to dismantle these violent practices.
- Examine the relationship between forced or threatened psychiatric interventions and acts of violence, especially domestic violence, and the link between certain psychiatric drugs and violence.
- Begin a national conversation about the need to avoid disability profiling and fear-based policymaking, and about the need for inclusive and non-scapegoating measures to promote peace and safety for all, including children and adults with disabilities. Focus on changing social and environmental factors and on cultivating active peace making skills and a sense of ethics, and not on targeting individuals for restriction of liberties based on suspicion or profiling of any kind.
- Ensure that all self-representative organizations of people labeled with psychiatric disabilities are consulted in policy concerning ourselves, and that neither family organizations nor mental health providers are accepted as speaking for us.

We say “Nothing About Us Without Us,” and we vote!

Contact:

Tina Minkowitz

minkowitz@chrusp.org

Signatories:

Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry chrusp.org

Intentional Peer Support intentionalpeersupport.org

Campaign to Repeal Mental Health Laws repealmentalhealthlaws.org

Voices of the Heart voicesoftheheart.net

Law Project for Psychiatric Rights psychrights.org

The Opal Project theopalproject.org

Mary Ellen Copeland mentalhealthrecovery.com

Dreamweaver’s Peer Support Inc.

Disabled in Action of Greater Syracuse DIASyracuse@tweny.rr.com