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(L)Henley St. Bridge, Knoxville, (R)Tennessee Aquarium, Chattanooga

## EAST TENNESSEANS CELEBRATE SUCCESS & IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY IN DISABILITY COMMUNITY;

*Dollywood's Wildwood Tree, Henley St. Bridge, Tennessee Aquarium, and Landmarks Across Tennessee Lighting Up "Coalition Blue" in Support of Disability Advocacy Day & Americans with Disabilities Act*

**Nashville, Tenn., March 9th, 2022** — The Tennessee Disability Coalition (TDC), an alliance of over 40+ member organizations and individuals advocating for 1.6 million Tennesseans with disabilities today announced Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> as Disability Advocacy Day in Tennessee. Now in its second year, [HJR0897](#), introduced by Representative Sam Whitson of District 65, Franklin, honors collective advocacy by bringing about “great social and political change, such as the passage of the civil rights legislation the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Tennessee Disability Act.”

Tennesseans with disabilities experience disparate access to the same basic education, housing, transportation, and healthcare as state residents without disability. Outside of a pandemic, self and collective advocacy is critical to ensuring access to essential supports and services. Amid the pandemic, with procedures and policies in constant flux, and state COVID-19 deaths eclipsing 25,000; Tennesseans with disabilities continue to use their voices to speak up for basic services, and speak out against policies that infringe on civil rights and other legal protections afforded under the Americans With Disabilities Act. Consequently, this often-marginalized and overlooked community has made a formidable impact on state policy. For a comprehensive list of achievements including the Tennessee Disability Act, the Katie Beckett Program, and many more, please visit [www.tndisability.org/disability-advocacy-day](http://www.tndisability.org/disability-advocacy-day).

“People with disabilities learn very early that advocacy is the only way to tackle the barriers they face in an ‘able’ world,” said Tennessee Disability Coalition Executive Director, Carol Westlake. “We learned decades ago that we have to build community, work together, and be clear about what’s needed. It takes advocacy to achieve the basic level of access, inclusion, and support that others take for granted. We have to stand up, speak up and follow up. And we have to stick together. We’re grateful to the 112<sup>th</sup> legislative session, and to the dozens of landmarks across the state lighting up blue to support Disability Advocacy Day on March 11<sup>th</sup> and the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

Four locations in East Tenn., and 20+ across the state, will light up “Coalition Blue” in support, solidarity, and recognition of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and successful advocacy by the disability community of Tenn.

**East TN:**

Dollywood, Wildwood Tree – Pigeon Forge  
 Henley Street Pedestrian Bridge – Knoxville  
 Liberty Tower - Chattanooga  
 Tennessee Aquarium – Chattanooga

**Middle TN:**

Adventure Science Center Pyramid – Nashville  
 Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park – Nashville  
 City Hall – Nashville  
 Customs House Museum & Cultural Center - Clarksville  
 Korean Veterans Memorial Bridge – Nashville  
 Nashville International Airport – Nashville  
 Nissan Stadium – Nashville  
 State Capitol Cupola – Nashville

**West TN:**

Big River Crossing – Memphis  
 Carl Perkins Civic Center – Jackson  
 City Hall – Jackson  
 Eiffel Tower Replica – Paris  
 Hernando DeSoto Bridge – Memphis  
 Liberty Bowl Stadium – Memphis  
 University of Memphis – Memphis

For organizations without lighting capacities, or to support Disability Advocacy Day as an individual, community members are encouraged to wear blue, and a digital library of graphics, messaging, associated hashtags, and other resources are available on the Tennessee Disability Coalition's website. Graphics include pre-sized social images for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and includes pre-sized wallpaper graphics for iPhone, iPad, and Android mobile devices for individual supporters to "light up" in support, and spark conversation.

For more information about Disability Advocacy Day or the Tennessee Disability Coalition please visit [www.tndisability.org](http://www.tndisability.org).

**About the Tennessee Disability Coalition:** The Tennessee Disability Coalition is a 501(c)3 nonprofit alliance of over 40+ member organizations and individuals joined to promote the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. With programs, public policy, and purpose we collectively advocate for self-determination, independence, empowerment, and inclusion for people with disabilities in areas such as accessibility, education, healthcare, housing, and voting rights. For more information about the Tennessee Disability Coalition, please visit <http://www.tndisability.org>, email [coalition@tndisability.org](mailto:coalition@tndisability.org), or call (615) 927-3694

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