

# ILRU NetWork

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## In this issue...

### SILCs as nonprofits?

...by *Richard Petty, IL Net Director*

Advancing independent living within a state is the Statewide Independent Living Council's primary function. What is the best organizational structure to get the job done? If you spend much time around SILC folks, you know that's a question that gets talked about a lot—especially the pros and cons of becoming a nonprofit organization.

The IL Net gets a steady flow of questions about it. Beyond the ramifications of declaring independence through nonprofit status, SILCs also want to know the practical aspects of “how do you get it done?” In this issue, we address the questions and concerns we hear most frequently.

In producing these articles, we spoke with SILCs representing pretty much the full spectrum of experiences and attitudes about becoming a nonprofit. Some of them believe (strongly!) that nonprofit status is the only way to achieve the independence and autonomy the federal law requires. Others are “on the fence,” and give us insight into the things you consider when deciding which way to go. And we feature one SILC that's taken a completely different approach by becoming a state agency.

For SILCs ready to take the plunge, we cover the basic steps to incorporating and getting recognized by IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. We've also added some websites and other good resources we hope will help.

Autonomy and credibility are important elements of a SILC's effectiveness in carrying out its role. Whether or not you agree that being a nonprofit is the best way to achieve those traits, we hope you'll find this newsletter thought provoking and useful.

## TO BE – OR NOT TO BE?

# 501(c)(3)

## Growing number of SILCs are “going nonprofit” for autonomy

Today, 14 statewide independent living councils are operating as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. By year's end, there will probably be 20. That's according to Bob Michaels, project consultant to ILRU, who works closely with SILCs of all shapes, sizes and stages of development. He thinks the trend toward “SILCs as nonprofits” will continue. The federal law that establishes SILCs (*Sec. 705, Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act*) states clearly that they “shall not be established as an entity within a State agency.” However, Michaels says, many councils haven't pursued another arrangement—largely because they feel they have enough independence and autonomy in their relationship with the designated state unit (DSU).

Eventually, he predicts, many of those SILCs will run into the situation when—no matter how autonomous they think they are—politics or bureaucracy will stifle their plans or activities. “Usually there are rules designed to protect the bureaucracy that don't work very well when you're trying to develop an independent living network,” Michaels says. “Sometimes we run into ridiculous obstacles.”

In some states, Michaels says, SILCs aren't privy to how much money their designated state unit (DSU) has budgeted for their activities. Many are not allowed to “hire, fire or evaluate” their own staff. With the DSU controlling both money and staff, it's hard for a SILC to take charge of its mission. “Under the law,” Michaels says, “we're supposed to be independent and have autonomy—and we don't.”

Some SILCs “will only be able tolerate the ambiguity for so long,” Michaels believes, before they will get serious about becoming an independent nonprofit organization. Even then, he advises, how much autonomy a SILC will realize depends on how well it negotiates for control of the federal funds that still must be channeled through the DSU.

Most nonprofit SILCs, says Michaels, get their funds through a contract with or grant from the DSU—and this is really where autonomy is established. He suggests that the SILC must be sure the agreement allows sufficient control, latitude and independence to do the things it wants to do.

He stresses, however, that with control of the dollars comes added responsibility. If it expects the DSU to hand over the money and get out of the way, a nonprofit SILC will have to establish policies and procedures for spending and accounting for the funds. The SILC will also need a clear plan spelling out how it will accomplish the grant or contract's requirements.

To contact Bob Michaels, call 480-961-0553 or send e-mail to [michaels@impulsedata.net](mailto:michaels@impulsedata.net).

# Desire for “true consumer control” prompted Kansas SILC to become the nation’s first nonprofit council

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“I know who my boss is—it’s the president of the SILCK. It’s not the governor or the secretary of state or the VR director.”

**Shannon Jones, Kansas**

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As Shannon Jones tells it, there was never a question about it. In 1994, when amendments to the Rehab Act dictated that SILCs would not be part of another state agency, the only thing the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas (SILCK) needed to decide was where it would set up shop when it separated from the state vocational rehabilitation agency.

Jones, SILCK executive director, says council members briefly entertained the idea of affiliating with the governor’s office but didn’t think that jived with the intent of the law. It was the VR agency that suggested becoming a nonprofit organization, Jones says. “They said the CILs do it, why wouldn’t it work for you?” Within a year the Kansas council became the first nonprofit SILC in the nation.

“We wanted to do it so we could truly be a consumer-controlled entity,” Jones says. “It has allowed us to hire staff, advocate at the state level and generate funds for lobbying—to be totally devoted to promoting the independent living philosophy.”

The transition started with “a lot of discussion and consideration” between SILC members, the DSU and governor’s office, Jones says. One of the first things they had to work out was how to incorporate as an autonomous entity when the governor appoints the membership. “The concern was,” Jones explains, “the appointments could be looked upon as political appointments and, thereby, not meeting the criteria of a stand-alone entity.”

The lawyer paid for with \$1,200 in Part B IL funds—“the best money we ever spent,” says Jones—came up with the solution. In its Articles of Incorporation, the SILCK is established as a membership organization—open to all residents of Kansas. The governor, then, appoints board members from among the candidates selected from the membership and recommended by the SILCK board.

With state incorporation papers filed, the SILCK moved on to getting set up with IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization. As the first of a kind to apply for the designation, Jones says it took several months of correspondence with the tax agency to figure out just what kind of organization a SILC is. Generally, though, Jones describes the process as “simple.”

Jones hopes the SILCK has paved a path to independence that other SILCs can easily follow. “It should be a SILC’s highest priority to say ‘we are consumer-controlled—we’re not VR controlled,’” she says. “I think the real proof of the pudding is who signs your paycheck—that’s who you work for.”

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Contact Shannon Jones by phone at 785-234-6990 or send e-mail to shanoz@aol.com.

## As a nonprofit, Georgia SILC supports CIL development

When the Georgia SILC became a nonprofit organization in 1995, there were only three consumer-controlled centers for independent living in the entire state. For the most part, independent living services were delivered by IL coordinators hired by the vocational rehabilitation agency and stationed at local field offices.

Back then, Pat Puckett was a member of the rehab agency’s IL advisory committee. She remembers a “constant struggle” to get the agency to “do right” in terms of providing IL services. “The truth as far as we could see it,” Puckett explains, “was that IL was the equivalent of the back room for people with significant disabilities. It was a place to park people.”

Today, Puckett is the executive director of the SILC—a nonprofit agency that controls the flow of the Part B IL dollars in Georgia. With those funds, the council helps consumer groups get information and develop the skills they need to start up CILs to fill out the SILC’s plan for a statewide network of centers. The assistance is offered in a variety of ways including

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“If you want to have people with disabilities in a central role in the IL movement, you’ve got to get your hands on the money.”

**Pat Puckett, Georgia**

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## More confidence a by-product of Arkansas SILC’s nonprofit move

As they worked to establish the Arkansas SILC as a nonprofit organization, Danielle Strickman and Jim Eakin anticipated that the move would result in more autonomy and independence for the council.

Strickman was a council member and Eakin the coordinator when they started the process in 1996. The two may not have guessed one by-product of the SILC’s new-found status—confidence.

“We felt stronger and clearer about our purpose and our relationship with the DSU,” says Strickman, who now lives in Florida. “We were separate—and we could strive to work with them—but we were not governed by them anymore.”

“It was like ‘hey, this is the way it’s intended. We’re our own organization now,’” adds Eakin, now the SILC’s executive director.

With the accomplishment came a sense of pride and a new way of approaching the SILC’s business. According to Strickman, one of the first opportunities to step up to the new status came when it was time to renegotiate the state plan, which includes the SILC’s resource plan and budget. “We had

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“...this is the way it’s intended to work.

We’re our own organization now.”

**Jim Eakin, Arkansas**

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# Idaho SILC seeks balance between desire for autonomy and realities of being an employer

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“We originally made a specific decision not to become a nonprofit because we felt like there was the potential to be *less* autonomous as a 501(c)(3) than as a state entity.”

**Kelly Buckland, Idaho**

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Until recently, the Idaho SILC had not seriously considered the option of becoming a nonprofit organization. It determined its own agenda, had a stable relationship with the DSU, set its own budget and had no problem bringing in funds from grants or donations. In fact, says Kelly Buckland, executive director, “we were concerned that we might *lose* autonomy if we became a nonprofit.”

The concern is, Buckland says, that to receive funds, the SILC would have to contract with the DSU. “We thought they might be able to exert more control over us through that contract than the current arrangement.”

The Idaho council was considered an independent state agency under the state board of education. The SILC’s budget

requests were forwarded through the rehab agency and the state board approved the request as submitted. That’s how it worked until last year.

For the first time, the education board imposed limits on how much money the SILC could request from the state legislature, took away the SILC’s lump sum budget authority and reduced employee salaries and benefits. Buckland says the new restrictions may be the legislature’s unfavorable response to the SILC’s advocacy activities. Now, he says, the council is taking another look at going nonprofit.

But the decision is not easy for a council that places a high value on compensating staff with competitive salaries and benefits. The SILC is

stymied by how to replace employee benefits—especially health insurance—that are currently provided by the state. “The problem is,” Buckland explains, “with a staff of 2.5 people, you’re too small to be a group for health insurance and any other kind of coverage is not available.”

Buckland says the SILC is also concerned it will be difficult to find funds for support services that are currently provided through the state. Combined with the employee concerns, Buckland says, that’s enough to cause the council to think twice about making a move. Nonetheless, he says, if the insurance issue can be resolved, the SILC will most likely seek nonprofit status.

In the meantime, the council is exploring other ways to restore autonomy to its current situation. Buckland says one possibility is a memorandum of agreement that would establish the SILC as an “independent state entity” required by federal law and protect the education board from liability for SILC activities.

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*To contact Kelly Buckland, send e-mail to [kbuckland@silc.state.id.us](mailto:kbuckland@silc.state.id.us) or telephone 208-334-3800.*

## In California, SILC functions as an independent state agency

The Rehab Act says a SILC can’t be part of a state agency—but it doesn’t say it can’t BE a state agency. And that’s exactly what the California council is—a state agency reporting directly to the governor’s office.

Executive Director Mike Collins acknowledges it’s an arrangement that might not work in every state. But it’s working in his state, he says, and working quite well.

Collins became the SILC’s first executive director in 1997, a short time after California’s governor issued an executive order establishing the council as a state agency. The order created an independent agency with the same powers and duties prescribed by the Rehab Act and its own line item budget. Part B IL funds, which still flow through the VR agency, are channeled to the SILC under the terms of a memorandum of understanding, at a level agreed to in the State Plan for IL.

“It’s a very good situation in a lot of ways,” Collins says, “especially when it comes to our role within the state

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“It’s a good role to play, because when people decide it’s time to go to the capitol to demonstrate we can go inside and talk to the people who are being demonstrated against and tell them why there are protests outside—and what might be done to keep it from recurring.”

**Mike Collins, California**

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bureaucracy. We have the same status as other independent state agencies. I have peer standing with other department directors—and that’s helpful in working on issues that are important to people with disabilities. We also have opportunities to work with the governor and his key staff. We can make sure they understand the independent living perspective on disability issues.”

The arrangement does limit the California SILC’s “flexibility” to some extent when it comes to direct advocacy, Collins says. “We are a cabinet agency. In reality our role is to educate the Legislature, other agencies, consumers, the general public and the governor about

disability-related issues, and to do that effectively we don’t have to take a public stance that would affect him negatively.”

Instead, Collins says the SILC uses its status within government to transmit information from the advocacy community to state leaders—and vice versa. “The SILC might not always be at the table alongside disability advocates who appear to be most vocal on state policy issues,” he says, “but a lot of the people who *are* at the table are there because they learned about the issues and opportunities from us.”

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*Contact Mike Collins at 916-445-0142 or send e-mail to [mcollins@calsilc.org](mailto:mcollins@calsilc.org).*



# Going Nonprofit

## The IL Net's guide to the basics steps to becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

*"What do we do to become a nonprofit organization?" That's among the questions we at the IL Net are asked most frequently. This guide is our effort to lay out the basic steps. Do we cover every last detail you'll need to consider in your nonprofit journey? No, that's why it's a "guide" and not a "manual." However, we've collected some links to other, more comprehensive resources we think will fill in the gaps. We've also incorporated tidbits of information and advice provided by a number of SILCs and CILs that have already traveled the nonprofit path. We hope you find it useful and informative. –Ed.*

### #1. Talk it up

Becoming a nonprofit organization is not a casual commitment. It's going to take planning and hard work to get through the process. And, once you're there, it may require your members and others you associate with to adjust to new roles, responsibilities and ways of doing things. It's a good idea to get their buy-in up front. Folks you'll want to talk with:

- **Your board and/or council members.** They need to agree on the reasons for going nonprofit, understand the pros and cons and understand and accept what will be required of them during and after the process.
- **The designated state unit (DSU) or other "parent" organization.** They may be all for it—they may not. If they support you, they may be able to help. If they don't support you, it's still smart to keep them informed.
- **The governor (if you're a SILC).** Governors generally don't like surprises. Since they appoint your members, it's important to keep them in the loop. Explain why you're seeking nonprofit status and resolve any issues or concerns up front. It's likely to keep your appointments process on the right track, and having the governor's support sends a powerful message to DSUs and others who may be impacted by the change.

### #2. Get stuff

There's a lot to know and do in order to be qualified as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization. While the steps are pretty logical and straightforward, it's important to know how they relate to each other. For example, one of the first things you'll do is register as a nonprofit corporation in your state. Some of the information included in your articles of incorporation is critical to gaining IRS approval as a tax-exempt organization later on. So you'll want to be familiar with the IRS requirements before you start setting up the corporation. To get started, you'll need:

- **Forms and procedures for establishing a nonprofit corporation.** The process may vary from state to state. Your state's comptroller and/or secretary of state's office is a good place to start.
- **IRS Publication 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.** This document provides a detailed overview of the application process and devotes a whole section (*Hint: It starts on p.13*) to 501(c)(3) organizations, including sample articles of incorporation.
- **IRS Package 1023: Application for Recognition of Exemption.** This is the form you'll use to apply for 501(c)(3) and step-by-step instructions.
- **IRS Form SS-4: Application for Employer Identification Number.** If you don't already have one, you need to get one. You can submit this form with the 1023 application.

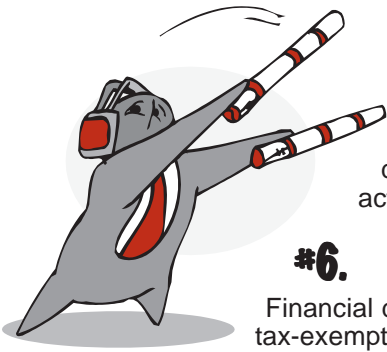
### #3. Incorporate

To qualify as a 501(c)(3) you must first file articles of incorporation to be registered in your state as a nonprofit corporation. Pay careful attention in creating the corporation documents—it can be tedious to amend them once they're filed. While the process is similar from state to state, each state has its own requirements and procedures. IRS looks closely at the organization's purpose and powers—as described in the articles of incorporation—to determine eligibility. State your organization's purpose in terms that IRS will easily recognize as complying with 501(c)(3) requirements.

### #4. Write bylaws

The IRS requires applicants for tax-exempt status to submit bylaws. Especially for SILCs attempting to be as autonomous as possible, comprehensive bylaws can be really useful in establishing ground rules for how you'll conduct business, relate to other organizations and agencies (like the DSU), budget and spend money and other important aspects of being a stand-alone organization.





## #5. Shape up your plan

A good plan that outlines your organization's purpose and planned activities will not only help you stay on track program-wise, it will be useful in developing the financial documents and description of activities required by IRS.

## #6. Organize your financial records

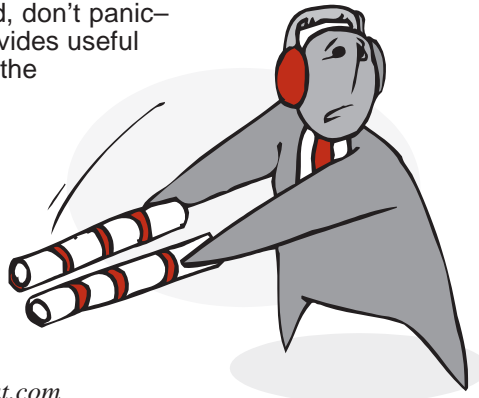
Financial data comprises a big part of the IRS application for tax-exempt status. Depending on how long the organization has been in existence, IRS asks for detailed revenue and expense information for the current year and as many as three years in the past. Startup organizations with less than a year under their belts must submit financial information for the current year and projections for the next two years.

## #7. Get help

It's not impossible to put together the IRS tax-exempt application on your own. But, because it is an important legal document, veterans of the process strongly encourage consulting with a lawyer or CPA familiar with the laws and processes—if only for a couple of hours of consultation.

## #8. File with IRS

To be designated as a tax exempt organization, IRS must approve your application. If you've done your homework, the application may zip right through the approval process. If IRS asks for more information or clarification of what you've submitted, don't panic—that's not unusual. *IRS Publication 557* provides useful information about how and what to file with the application.



## STARTING POINTS

### get info for & about nonprofits

About.com Start a Nonprofit – [nonprofit.about.com](http://nonprofit.about.com)

Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI) – [www.independentsector.org/clpi](http://www.independentsector.org/clpi)

Development Resource Group, Inc. (DRG), *The Difference* webzine – [www.drgnyc.com](http://www.drgnyc.com)

Nonprofit Genie – [www.genie.org](http://www.genie.org)

Nonprofit Risk Management – [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)

National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB) – [www.ncnb.org](http://www.ncnb.org)

Internet Nonprofits Center – [www.nonprofits.org](http://www.nonprofits.org)

Foundation Center – [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)

### get forms

IRS Information for Tax Exempt Organizations – [www.irs.gov/bus\\_info/eo/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/bus_info/eo/index.html)

National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers – [www.sso.org/nasact](http://www.sso.org/nasact)\*

National Association of Secretaries of State – [www.nass.org/sos/sosflags.html](http://www.nass.org/sos/sosflags.html)\*

United States Postal Service – [new.usps.com](http://new.usps.com) (click to *Business Mail 101/Nonprofit Rates*)

### get help

National Council of Nonprofit Associations – [www.ncna.org](http://www.ncna.org)\*

American Institute of CPAs – [www.aicpa.org](http://www.aicpa.org)\*

Exemption Advisory Services (Guide to IRS Form 1023) – [members.aol.com/irsform1023/](http://members.aol.com/irsform1023/)

\*look for links to offices or organizations by state)

## Professional help today may prevent troubles and headaches tomorrow

Bill Kennemore, certified public accountant (CPA), knows nonprofits. Approximately 70 percent of his practice in Duluth, Ga., is devoted to nonprofit organizations—including the Georgia SILC. Based on an interview with Kennemore, the following are some pointers for how to find—and what to do with—a CPA:

- Even if it's just for a two-hour meeting, it's a good idea to consult with a CPA about your plans for becoming a nonprofit and the things you need to do. He or she can help sort through things like what fiscal year to use, what accounting method is best for your organization and how to create a financial plan that IRS will accept. You'll have to spend some money, but it's likely to be a lot less than what you'll pay to clean up a mess later on—when IRS slaps a penalty on you, for instance.
- Locate a CPA who has experience working with nonprofits. Ask how much of their business is devoted to it. Ask for names of some of their clients. Find out the typical size of the organizations they work with. Look for a CPA who works with groups that resemble yours.
- Find a CPA who's familiar with the kind of work you do and knows what's required of groups that get state and/or federal grants and/or contracts (*i.e.*, audits, reporting requirements).
- If you don't know a CPA who fits the bill, check around with other nonprofits that are similar in size and function to yours. Talk to some of your community leaders who are likely to have been down the nonprofit path a time or two.
- Be a little cautious of prominent local attorneys or CPAs who volunteer to donate the services. Often they will delegate the task to a staffer who may not have the necessary experience or background.
- Be cautious, too, of board members or volunteers who offer to handle it. They may have excellent experience handling nonprofit matters—and that's good. Then again, they may not.
- If you're going to do fundraising as a nonprofit, don't start before you actually are a nonprofit. Sometimes groups get the cart before the horse and generate funds before they're legitimate nonprofits. IRS has a word for this—*fraud*.

## The nonprofit lobby

Lobbying. It may not be the only reason SILCs are considering “going nonprofit” but it is certainly among the top motivators mentioned by those we spoke with for this newsletter. For them, shaping public policy is an important part of advancing the independent living movement. And the way to do that is to be right there in the arena with the folks who make the policy.

There is no question about it—501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations can lobby. Yet, many of these groups are nervous and uncertain about it. Maybe it’s because they don’t know the rules—and there’s no question it’s important to know and understand them. Maybe it’s because some policy-makers (who may not know the rules either) have made them afraid. Whatever the reason, the good news is there are some great resources available to get educated about nonprofit lobbying.

For information developed specifically for the IL community, check out ILRU’s *Frequently Asked Questions About Lobbying*, available online at [www.ilru.org/ilnet/files/reading/lobbying.html](http://www.ilru.org/ilnet/files/reading/lobbying.html)

The **Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest** website is another outstanding resource—especially for information about how to lobby legally with fewer restrictions. Get there via Independent Sector’s home page: [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org).

# New Mexico SILC came “this close” to making the transition to nonprofit

To this day, Julie Ballinger is amazed at how it all fell apart. Three years ago, the New Mexico SILC was on the brink of becoming a nonprofit organization. At the time, Ballinger was a council member and a CIL director. She was among a few SILC members who were the driving force behind the effort. For months, she recalls, council members discussed, negotiated and worked hard to get the papers filed and every detail nailed down. They even had the future director on board to guide the new 501(c)(3) into new organizational waters.

Then, with no warning, the effort came to an abrupt halt. Disheartened and frustrated, SILC members simply walked away from it and, to this point, haven’t tried again. “Everybody just took a deep breath and moved on,” Ballinger sighs.

It would be even worse, says Ballinger, IF the SILC had been trying to escape a controlling DSU. That was not the case. In fact, the council enjoys such a positive relationship with VR Director Terry Brigance (who supports the SILC becoming a private nonprofit organization), some council members were initially reluctant to change things. But Ballinger, who is now married to Brigance, says she persistently repeated the message that “DSU directors come and go.” Beyond that, she says “we felt it was important to establish our own identity separate from the DSU, regardless of the good relationship.”

In addition to the usual things that come up in the course of incorporating and getting established as a 501(c)(3), the SILC had to work its way through some procurement and funding issues peculiar

to New Mexico state law. But even those complexities were not the final stumbling blocks. In the final analysis, it was a personnel issue that brought the process to a painful end.

From the time the SILC was created, a consultant—controlled by the SILC and paid for by the DSU—coordinated its activities and provided administrative support. As a nonprofit, the SILC planned to establish a full-time executive director’s position. In fact, they had already found the person they wanted and he had moved to New Mexico to lead the SILC into the transition of becoming an accountable, full-fledged nonprofit. He agreed to come on as a co-consultant until the transformation to a freestanding nonprofit was complete. Ballinger says, at the time, it seemed like the ideal situation because he would have some time to learn the ropes and the outgoing consultant could finish out her contract with the DSU.

It was less than ideal. The consultants clashed. They accused each other. They accused the VR agency. And the new guy left on two days’ notice. “Talk about hours and hours of work just going down the tube,” Ballinger says sadly. “It put us in terrible disarray.” In hindsight, she says, it might have been better to skip the transition step and let a new director take on the challenges of running the operations of a brand new nonprofit and learning about the SILC at the same time.

If nothing else, the situation highlights the importance of developing strong skills in an area that may be new to SILCs that are stepping out on their own for the first time—personnel management. Blase Gaude, who chairs the SILC now and was on hand for the debacle, says if nothing else “we’ve learned some important lessons about the recruitment process and some of the complications that go along with being responsible for an employee.”

Guade says, while there hasn’t been any serious discussion about it since the failed effort, the option to go nonprofit remains open. “Because we have a great relationship with the VR director right now,” he says, “we’re not setting roofs on fire to get it done.” But, he adds, “we do want to be in position in the event things change—which can easily happen in government.”

*Julie Ballinger is a disability rights and independent living consultant in Albuquerque, NM, and can be contacted at 505-797-8612 or by e-mail at [julieb4@flash.net](mailto:julieb4@flash.net). Contact Blase Gaude, SILC chair, at [bpgaude@sandia.gov](mailto:bpgaude@sandia.gov) or call 505-844-5749.*

### Georgia ... continued from page 2

mini-grants for seed money, study tours to existing CILs, challenge grants and training scholarships.

Today there are six CILs—two funded with Part B dollars and four with Part C funds—and two more in the works. “Now the SILC is a significant force in the development of CILs,” Puckett says.

The two best things about being a nonprofit organization, Puckett says, are the autonomy and the ability to raise funds—especially private funds that can be used for things like lobbying and ADAPT activities. For example, last year the SILC raised private funds to support a large coalition of organizations in its lobbying activities related to an *Unlock the Waiting Lists* campaign. “As a result of that campaign,” she says, “our state legislature made the biggest financial commitment in our history for home and community-based services.”

The freedom of being a nonprofit group, Puckett points out, comes with new responsibilities that may require developing some new skills. “It requires more energy and vigilance to sustain your organization,” she says, noting that nonprofit corporations are required to maintain minutes and other records, as well as file annual tax returns. “Without a clear vision of the future and strong leadership,” she advises, “you can get caught up in organizational minutiae that will eat you alive.”

Call Pat Puckett at 770-270-6860 or send e-mail to [silcga@mindspring.com](mailto:silcga@mindspring.com)

to rise to the level of being a 501(c)(3)," Strickman says, describing the council's preparation prior to submitting its proposal to the two state rehab agencies (blind and general).

The first three-year proposal the new nonprofit SILC submitted included three unprecedented requests: 1) to continue to pay for the council and its activities with Title I strategic planning funds (making more Part B funds available for services), 2) to increase the SILC's budget to nearly double its previous level, and 3) to give Arkansas' CILs a much larger percentage of the Part B dollars. When the negotiations were over, the SILC prevailed on all three requests.

Strickman and Eakin agree things might not have turned out so well if the SILC had not become a nonprofit. Aside from having a better sense of how to document and present a proposal, Eakin says the council was more confident in its negotiating position. "We have standing and respect that we didn't have before," he says.

About the same time the SILC was negotiating the new plan, it was also asserting its independence by leading the advocacy effort for passage of a state IL Act. The council realized partial success on the first try. The legislation passed, but was not funded.

Getting state funds attached to that law is still on the SILC's agenda, as are a number of activities that the pre-nonprofit organization might not have thought of—or attempted. Eakin says that's because the council is becoming more comfortable with its new role and responsibilities and is starting to "think more outside the box."

"We're still growing and still defining ourselves," he says. "But we're getting to the point that the Arkansas SILC is something people can count on."

Contact Jim Eakin, Arkansas SILC director, at 501-372-0607 or send e-mail to [ailec@alltel.net](mailto:ailec@alltel.net). Call Danielle Strickman, new Florida resident, at 305-443-3364 or send e-mail to [dstrickm@earthlink.net](mailto:dstrickm@earthlink.net).

### Can you name the 14 states in which the SILCs have become 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations?

Arkansas	New York
Florida	Pennsylvania
Georgia	Tennessee
Hawaii	Texas
Illinois	Utah
Kansas	West Virginia
Michigan	Washington, DC



ILRU and NCIL are pleased to announce the programs selected as *Innovative CILs and SILCs 2001*. Look for detailed descriptions of these programs and tips for launching similar projects in upcoming issues of *Readings in Independent Living*.

#### BLUE RIDGE INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER

Roanoke, VA  
*Restaurant Reviews*

#### CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE

Grand Junction, CO  
*Cross-Disability Computer Users Group*

#### NORTHEAST INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM, INC.

Lawrence, MA  
*Employment Program*

#### NORTHWESTERN ILLINOIS

#### CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Rock Falls, IL  
*READY Bonus Program for Personal Assistants*

#### RED ROCK CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE

St. George, UT  
*Outstationing Program*

#### SOUTH DAKOTA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

*Home Modifications/Assistive Devices Program*

#### SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING

Juneau, AK  
*Outdoor Recreation and Community Access (ORCA)*

#### SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA CIL, INC.

Rochester, MN  
*Ability Tech*

#### WESTSIDE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Los Angeles, CA  
*Mental Health Peer Support Project*

#### WISCONSIN COALITION OF INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

Madison, WI  
*Quality Indicators for Independent Living Services*

# NetNotes

■■■Declaring that “unjustified isolation or segregation of qualified individuals with disabilities through institutionalization is a form of disability-based discrimination,” President Bush signed his long-awaited Executive Order on **Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities** on June 19. The order and a fact sheet are posted on the White House website: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010619.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010619.html).

■■■The Health Care Financing Administration has issued a solicitation for proposals related to its **Systems Change for Community Living** initiative, described in detail in our last issue of *ILRU NetWork*. There are four distinct grant solicitations in the coordinated invitation: Nursing Facility Transitions, Community-Integrated Personal Assistance Services and Supports, Real Choice Systems Change and National Technical Assistance for Community Living. You may recall that CILs are specifically named as eligible applicants in the Nursing Facility Transitions and PAS grants. The deadline for the Technical Assistance grant is July 16. The rest are due July 20. More detailed information is available online at HCFA’s website: [www.hcfa.gov/medicaid/systemschange](http://www.hcfa.gov/medicaid/systemschange).

■■■There’s still time to sign up for the last of this year’s **Learning Online** training series—*Ethics and Values*. The deadline for registration is Aug. 20. The three-week course begins Sept. 10. The training will be conducted as a “forum” in which participants take part in discussions led by instructor Richard P. Oestreich, Ph.D. Learning Online is a collaborative effort of the IL Net, ILRU/NCIL National Training & Technical Assistance Project and RehabLeadership Program at the University of Northern Colorado. For more information about the course and how to register, visit the IL Net Training Calendar on the ILRU website <[www.ilru.org](http://www.ilru.org)> or send e-mail to [ilru@ilru.org](mailto:ilru@ilru.org).

■■■Is your flame of enthusiasm for advancing the causes of the independent living movement in danger of flickering out? Are the high demands for your time, energy and creativity pushing you to the brink of burnout? If so, you won’t want to miss our next issue of *ILRU NetWork*. **The topic is burnout**—what’s causing it, the toll it’s taking on the IL community and ideas for what to do about it. We want the newsletter to be meaningful to you, and you can help make sure it is by sharing your own experiences with burnout, resources you’ve found helpful and/or ideas for keeping that fire burning. Send your comments via e-mail to [ilru@ilru.org](mailto:ilru@ilru.org) or call Carri George at 713-520-0232.

## ilru NetWork

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