

TACKLE BOX

JULY 2025

AWARENESS MONTH & DAYS

- [Disability Pride Month](#)
- [National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#)
- [Thurgood Marshall's Birthday](#) - July 2nd
- [International Non-Binary Peoples Day](#) - July 14th
- [International Nelson Mandela Day](#) - July 18th
- [International Self-Care Day](#) - July 24th
- [National Disability Independence Day \(commemorates the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act\)](#) - July 26th
- [International Day of Friendship](#) - July 30th

The Passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act

The fight for anti-discriminatory legislation for disabled people has been a long battle that was fought bravely by activists dating back to the 1800s. Like other civil rights movements, these activists were faced with pushback, and every small step forward was met with what seemed like an impassable wall of resistance. Luckily, these brave Americans were not willing to live under discriminatory and inaccessible conditions any longer, and their perseverance led to real change.

How it Began:

Following the Great Depression in the 1930s and 1940s, disabled activists formed the League of the Physically Handicapped. This organization fought for employment opportunities for people with disabilities in America. Following these trailblazers, various other organizations formed during the 50s and 60s. We Are Not Alone and the National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) fought for alternative forms of education for students with disabilities, with most of the efforts being led by parents of such students. These efforts were heard by Congress, which led to the passing of several sections of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Section 501 supports employees with disabilities in federal workplaces, and Section 508 ensures access to information and data for individuals with disabilities. While the passing of this legislation was a massive success for disabled Americans, tensions between lawmakers and disabled activists would reach a head over Section 504, which would prohibit the discrimination of individuals with disabilities in the workplace and their programs and activities. Section 504 was written but was not implemented, and after three years of protest, President Carter assigned a task force to review the section. Afraid that the review would weaken the protections of 504, the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) demanded that Section 504 be signed into law by April 5th, 1977. When that day came and the section remained unsigned, protesters organized a sit in at a federal building in San Francisco that led to the signing of the regulations. This success was described by Kitty Cone as the first time **"disability really was looked at as an issue of civil rights rather than an issue of charity and rehabilitation at best, pity at worst"**.



Activists gathering to demand the signing of Section 504.

Black and white image of protestors holding signs along the road. Sign reads "RIGHTS For The Disabled, SIGN 504 Unchanged"

Americans with Disabilities Act:

The success of Section 504 did not end the fight for accessibility for people with disabilities in America. In particular, the fight for wheelchair ramps and lifts to access public transportation was the issue that prevented the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Many lawmakers argued that it would be too expensive and difficult to implement; thus, the act remained stagnant. This led to the iconic "Capitol Crawl" protest in 1990. To demonstrate the mountains that disabled people climb in their everyday lives to complete a task that able-bodied people may not even think twice about, protesters set aside their wheelchairs, canes, and crutches and began to climb the 365 stairs to the Capitol Building. Among the protesters was 8-year-old Jennifer Keelan, a girl with cerebral palsy who completed the climb. When told that she did not need to complete the climb, Keelan passionately claimed, **"I will go all night if I have to!"**. Once Keelan and the other protesters reached the Capitol Building, a peaceful sit-in ensued. It is this protest that is credited with contributing to the passage of the ADA. In total, the US Congress passed more than 50 pieces of legislation from 1960 to the passing of the ADA in 1990, and while real change has occurred, the fight is far from over.

Protest: Expression of Patriotism

It is important to remember the brave Americans who have fought rigorously for the freedoms we have today. As we begin our Independence Day celebrations this month, I urge you to remember what those freedoms are and how we have achieved them. We live in a nation that was founded on activism and courageous individuals like Jennifer Keelan at the Capitol Crawl. Individuals who love this country so much that they are willing to fight to make it a safer, stronger, and kinder place for other Americans. Peaceful protest is a protected freedom in the United States and has led to a nation that can more justly serve its people. If you feel that our country could better serve the American people, **speak up**.



Top: Black and white photo of wheelchair-using protesters fighting for their civil rights.
Bottom: Eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins crawls up the steps of the U.S. Capitol with other protesters during the "Capitol Crawl."



Hit the Road with Confidence: ADA Rights for Summer Travelers

Fun in the summer sun is meant for everyone! Whether you're cruising the open road or jumping on a jet, travelers with disabilities have the right to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Jessica Luzanilla's article, ["Summer Traveling and Your ADA Rights,"](#) outlines the basic accommodations required by law and offers helpful resources for people with disabilities planning to travel.

FEATURED ARTIST

GORDON SASAKI



Gordon Sasaki is a Japanese-American artist who uses his voice and creative abilities to call attention to those individuals who have been historically “unseen”. After a spine injury in his young-adult life, Sasaki became a full-time wheelchair user. Since the accident, he has dedicated his artistic career to creating art that increases the visibility of people with disabilities and encourages individuals of all physical and mental abilities to create. Sasaki once described the role his disability has played in the creation of his art by saying, “Through my work, I reference disability as a part of my identity... Significant, yes, but not a singular, all-defining characteristic. More accurately, it’s just one facet of my identity that contributes towards making me who I am.” Sasaki wishes to rewrite the narrative that he is defined by his wheelchair, when that is just a part of who he is. When he is not creating his own art, Sasaki is mentoring other artists at museums, schools, universities, and private institutions.

Top Left: Photograph of Gordon Sasaki seated in front of his artwork; Top Right: *Gold Wheelchair*, Illustration of a red wheelchair with gold leaf background; Bottom: Gordon Sasaki teaches a class at the Museum of Modern Art

Recommended Watch: On ADA History

“Change, Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act” narrates the decades-long fight for equality that led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. While many accessibility features, such as curb cuts, are common today, they were once the subject of a pitched battle fought on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Through the voices of key participants, the film highlights the courage and determination of those who fought for change, representing the success of a significant civil rights movement. This tale exemplifies the effectiveness of coalition building and bipartisan compromise in democracy.

Watch for FREE



Finding Patriotism in Divided Times

The season is upon us—the red, white, and blue, star-spangled celebration of the United States’ Declaration of Independence is here. Flags appear everywhere, calling for patriotism, but for some, the sounds of brass bands blaring anthems fall a little flat. Don’t worry if you struggle to find your patriotism—you’re not alone. A Wall Street Journal poll found that only 38% of Americans view patriotism as very important, a marked decline from previous decades (1).

Perhaps the politicization of patriotism is one reason so many are struggling to find the passion to participate in flag-waving this year. The left often portrays patriotism as counterproductive to identity-based political progress and a threat to cosmopolitan globalism, while the right uses accusations of anti-patriotism to push back against progressive change—occasionally twisting patriotism into toxic nationalism or sterile nostalgia. Confusing modern nationalism with patriotism happens all too often. At its simplest, patriotism is love for or devotion to one’s country. Nationalism, by contrast, asserts that the interests of one’s own nation are distinct from, and superior, to those of other nations or the collective good. When taken too far, nationalism can lead individuals to believe in

their superiority over others of different ethnicities, religions, or national origins (3). When one looks around and sees the inequality and injustice still present in our society, it’s hard to feel pride in our country—let alone enough fervor to warp patriotism into the prejudice-ridden form modern nationalism can take (4).

What must be realized is that the United States is not an endpoint or a static definition of who we are, but rather an embodiment of ideals—and a journey to discover who we can become. To be a patriot is to be aspirational. If we cannot accept government policy as it stands or the current status of our nation, it is our duty to strive for improvement (2, 4). Being an American patriot is not about flag-waving on the Fourth of July, but about advancing the core values of equality, justice, and unalienable rights enshrined in the foundational documents of this nation (2). It’s about fostering a collective identity, one that draws not only from our shared traditions and culture, but also from the historical successes and failures of our nation. It’s about using the lessons of history, including those found in its darkest annals, to build a future where all people have opportunities for success. It’s about welcoming anyone who seeks to embrace our fundamental values, even those born in distant nations (2).

Patriotism is not about grand gestures but rather about acts of service in our communities and engaging with our neighbors as people, not political adversaries. True patriots use the strength of our nation to overcome inequalities and to ensure that every person has full access to “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (5). American patriotism is not simply a love for our nation, but a belief in the fundamental values and rights enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. While celebrating the Fourth of July this year, remember patriotism is not about watermelon, hot dogs, and fireworks, but rather standing unflinchingly for the unalienable rights granted to all people who reside within this great nation.



American flag in the hands of a diverse group of people representing patriotism as a collective evolving nation goal.

References:

1. [America Pulls Back from Values That Once Defined It](#). The Wall Street Journal, 2023
2. [How to Think about Patriotism](#). National Affairs, 2018
3. [Patriotism vs. Nationalism: What’s the Difference?](#). Dictionary.com, 2022
4. [Protest and Patriotism](#). The Harvard Crimson, 2020
5. [The Declaration of Independence](#), 1776

Your Voice Matters: Seeking Feedback on Committee Name Change

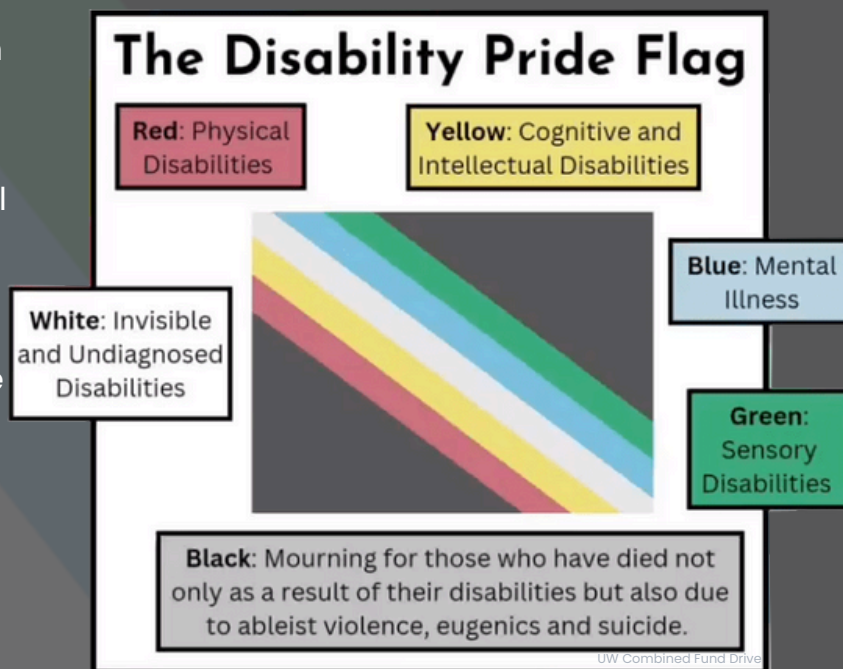
The Michigan AFS DEIJB Committee is seeking feedback on a potential name change to better align with other AFS diversity, equity, and inclusion committees. Beyond alignment, the new name aims to foster a more inclusive and approachable environment.

We are specifically seeking input on whether to adopt the acronym FishCAST and whether "Community" or "Culture" should be used in its full name. Full details regarding the name change are available at the top of the feedback form, linked below. If you haven't yet completed the Google form, please do so by **July 14**. Thank you for your input and continued support!

[Potential DEIJB Committee Renaming Feedback Form](#)

The Meaning behind the Theme

Each Tackle Box we attempt to link the theme to a subject covered in that edition. This month is no different, with the theme drawn from the Disability Pride Flag—a powerful symbol of solidarity, visibility, and progress. Designed by Ann Magill to be intentionally inclusive of diverse disabilities, the flag features a diagonal band of five colors on a black background. The colors, and the way they are arranged, each hold a distinct meaning. The diagonal band of color represents breaking through barriers, overcoming isolation, and the creativity and vitality within the disability community. The use of the six standard international flag colors reflects the global and far-reaching nature of the disability community. For details on what each color represents refer to the adjacent image and for more information about the history and development of the Disability Pride Flag, please read AmeriDisability's article, "[Here's What the Disability Pride Flag Represents](#)".



Charting the Course for the American Fisheries Society: 2025-2029 Draft Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan Committee is seeking feedback on the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, which is the document that guides committees and annual plans of work to align with the Society's mission and goals. Building from previous plans, the Strategic Plan Committee strove to represent the current and future direction of AFS, as well as incorporate metrics for the plan's Goals and Strategies. Furthermore, this draft defines the Society's Vision, outlines the mission of AFS and the Units, proposes modifications to AFS operations and business models, and provides guidance for the implementation of the plan within each Unit. The document is available for review on the AFS website: : [2025-2029 Draft Strategic Plan](#). If you have comments, please submit them to Julie DeFilippi Simpson (julie.simpson@accsp.org) by July 30, 2025.

The DEIJB Committee remains committed to fostering an inclusive environment that ensures the MI AFS has a welcoming space for everyone. If you'd like to get involved, share resources, or simply connect, we encourage you to reach out! We welcome your voice and participation! You can contact us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com or submit items anonymously.

Warm Wishes -

Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Tracy Galarowicz (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)