



NDSC Policy Summit Agenda

Omni Shoreham Hotel and Capitol Hill
September 29 - 30, 2026

Tuesday, September 29

Time	Session	Location	Presenter(s)
7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Registration & Networking Breakfast	Blue Pre-function Room	
8:30 AM - 8:45 AM	Welcome & Summit Kickoff From Personal Stories to Policy Change	Blue Ballroom	Andre Pineda <i>NDSC Board President</i> Adrian Forsythe <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Assistant</i>
8:45 AM - 9:45 AM	Storytelling for Advocacy Your Story is the Strategy: Making it Stick with Decisionmakers	Blue Ballroom	Jawanda Mast <i>NDSC Grassroots Advocacy Manager</i> Sam Iannone <i>NDSC Communications Coordinator</i> Jessie Smart <i>NDSC Policy Council</i>
9:45 AM - 10:15 AM	The Big Asks What We're Taking to Capitol Hill	Blue Ballroom	Heather Sachs <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Co-Director</i> Valerie C. Williams <i>Apokrisis Consultants, Inc. Co-Founder & CEO; Former Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education</i> Stephanie Smith Lee <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Co-Director; Former Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education</i>
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	BREAK		
10:30 AM - 11:15 AM	The Hill Perspective What Hill Staff Really Think: What Makes Advocacy Successful	Blue Ballroom	Moderators: Stephanie Smith Lee <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Co-Director</i> Jocelyn Gaines <i>NDAC Member</i> Panelists: Brad Thomas <i>Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy, House of Representatives Committee on Education and Workforce</i> Hanna Vohra <i>Senior Legislative Assistant, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen</i>

Time	Session	Location	Presenter(s)
11:15 AM - 11:45 AM	Role Play Back on Track: Lessons from a Hill Meeting Gone Wrong	Blue Ballroom	Jim Hudson <i>NDSC Executive Director</i> Hannah LaCour <i>NDSC Board Member</i> Cindy Liu <i>Advocate, Speaker, Founder of LooHoo's Enterprises</i> Rachel Mast <i>NDAC Member</i> Jawanda Mast <i>NDSC Grassroots Advocacy Manager</i> Roxane Romanick <i>NDSC Policy Council</i> Stormie Zanfordino <i>NDAC Member</i>
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Lunch	Blue Ballroom	Bret and Jack Bowerman <i>Run for Opportunity</i> Rebecca Cokley <i>Program Director for U.S. Disability Rights, Ford Foundation</i>
12:45 PM - 1:15 PM	Keynote Address: The Future of Competitive Integrated Employment	Blue Ballroom	Adrian Forsythe <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Assistant</i> Julie Hocker <i>U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy</i>
1:15 PM - 1:30 PM	BREAK		
1:30 PM - 2:15 PM	Policy Breakout #1 Employment Foundations:* Working in the Community: Why Jobs Matter and What Needs to Change	Blue Ballroom	Kyle Stumpf <i>Prep Cook at Pizza Ranch & Box Folder at Papa John's</i> Bill Stumpf <i>Disability Employment Advocate</i> Kelly Kulzer-Reyes <i>California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition Co-Chair</i>
1:30 PM - 2:15 PM	Policy Breakout #1 Employment Deep Dive:** Ending Subminimum Wage & Advancing CIE: Policy, Systems, and Strategy	Hampton Ballroom	Rylin Rodgers <i>Disability Policy Director, Microsoft</i> Liz Weintraub <i>Senior Advocacy Specialist, Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)</i>
2:15 PM - 2:30 PM	BREAK		
2:30 PM - 3:15 PM	Policy Breakout #2 SSI & Financial Security Foundations: Understanding SSI: Saving, Working, and Keeping Benefits	Blue Ballroom	Kathleen Romig <i>Senior Fellow, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)</i> Jeremiah Foster <i>"Chef Jeremiah"</i> Opal Foster <i>President, Parents of Children with Down Syndrome of Prince George's County MD</i>

Time	Session	Location	Presenter(s)
2:30 PM -3:15 PM	Policy Breakout #2 SSI & Financial Security Deep Dive: Modernizing SSI: Asset Limits, Income Limits, and Policy Reform	Hampton Ballroom	Rebecca D. Vallas <i>Chief Executive Officer, National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI)</i> Heather Hancock-Blackburn <i>Administrative Assistant in Special Education Services, Oklahoma State Department of Education</i>
3:15 PM - 3:20 PM	BREAK		
3:20 PM - 4:00 PM	Hill Day Logistics Preparing for Capitol Hill: Logistics and Expectations	Blue Ballroom	Micah Rothkopf <i>NDSC Policy & Advocacy Associate</i>
4:00 PM - 4:45 PM	Team Planning Huddles	Blue Ballroom	
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM	Evening Reception	Blue Terrace	

***Foundations sessions:** Explain the basics in plain, easy-to-understand language. No prior policy knowledge is needed. These sessions will help you understand the issue, why it matters to people with Down syndrome and their families, and the key policies and advocacy efforts underway.

****Deep Dive sessions:** Recommended for advocates who already understand the basics and want to learn more. Deep Dive sessions go beyond the basics to explore policy details, current proposals, challenges, and advocacy strategies. These sessions are designed for participants who have some familiarity with the topic and want a deeper understanding to strengthen their advocacy.

Wednesday, September 30

Time	Session	Location
8:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Congressional Breakfast Reception	SR-325, The Kennedy Caucus Room
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Hill Meetings	Schedules are available on the AdvocacyDay app

Congressional Breakfast Reception
Sponsored by Microsoft

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Russell Senate Office Building, SR-325

Getting to Room SR-325
From the entrance on the corner of Delaware and C Street: Enter at the Russell Rotunda and head to the elevator bank on the right. Take an elevator up to the 3rd floor. Turn left to walk partway around the Russell Rotunda. SR-325 will be on your right, just off of the rotunda.

Join elected officials and Capitol Hill staff members at the Congressional Breakfast Reception to kick off the Hill Day. Light pastries (regular, gluten-free, and nut-free), bagels, fruit, coffee, tea, and orange juice will be served.

Note: Meetings with elected officials or staff members take priority if there is a time conflict.

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