



Joni Serves on US State Department Advisory Committee

Friday, August 19, 2005

On August 15th Joni attended the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities to serve the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Having traveled to over 41 countries and witnessed firsthand the plight of disabled people living in poverty, Joni believes she is able to provide a unique prospective and seasoned advice to the State Department as it concerns forming and implementing U.S. foreign policy and assistance. The Advisory Committee includes Dr. Condoleezza Rice, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, and eight members with disabilities including Joni.

After the day long briefing meeting, Joni said, "I'm impressed that, when it comes to foreign policy and programs, the Secretary and her team truly desire to include disabled people. We will be taking a close look at topics such as the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability issues at the World Bank and at the Dept. of USAID. All of us on the Committee had an opportunity to ask key questions after each briefing by various officials. As an American, I was moved by the mission statement of our State Department which is to 'help create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world to the benefit of the American people and the international community.' It's clear these objectives can only be fully realized if we remember those with disabilities, who are, in fact, the poorest of the poor. And as a Christian, I'm also mindful that a more secure and democratic world means freedom to openly share hope and help in Christ -- and that's *always* a good thing!"

Joni is looking forward the next meeting scheduled in early 2006. She considers it an honor to be asked to serve her country, as well as the interests of disabled persons in less developed nations. Please pray God will grant her wisdom and understanding as she serves on this special Committee.

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