



**March, 2013**

**Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT)  
Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations Recommendation- \$6 million**

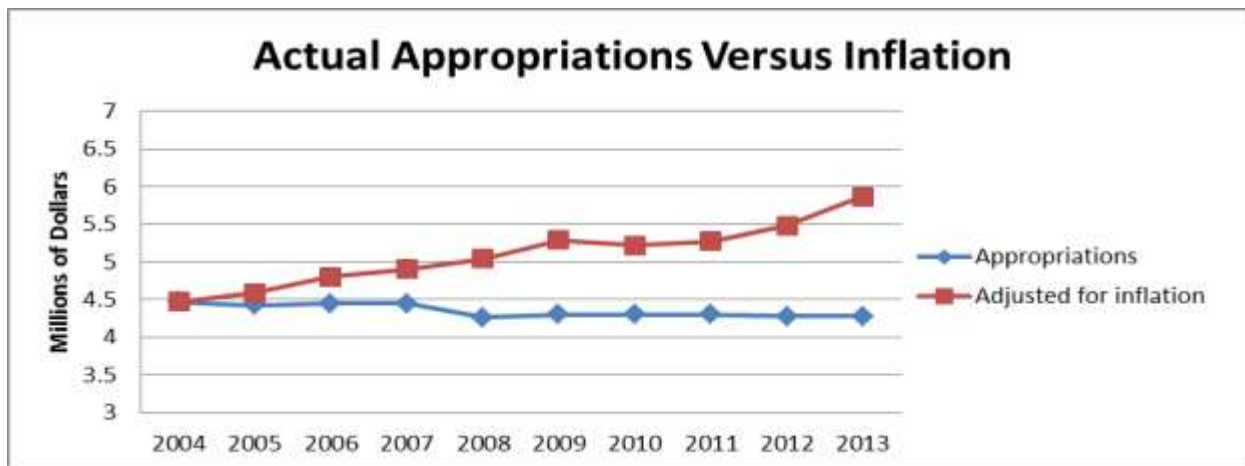
**Background/ Funding History**

The Assistive Technology (AT) Act was reauthorized with unanimous support in 2004. Since its creation almost two decades ago, the programs funded under the AT Act, such as the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) program have had a significant impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

Funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services' Rehabilitation Services Administration, PAAT has been a major part of ensuring children and adults with disabilities gain access to critically needed assistive technology in schools, at home, and at work. Access to appropriate and accessible technology can help children and adults with disabilities live in their communities, and become economically self-sufficient.

PAAT funding has not kept pace with inflation or the demand for assistive technology services. Since Fiscal Year 2004, the PAAT program has either been level funded or suffered from across-the-board cuts contained in appropriation bills. Thus, in Fiscal Year 2012, the PAAT program was only funded at \$4.3 million. The lack of adequate funding for the PAAT program hinders the ability of people with disabilities to be economically self-sufficient and live independently in their community.

**NDRN recommends a funding level of \$6 million for Fiscal Year 2014**



## **Program Responsibilities**

From the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to the Workforce Investment Act, assistive technology is linked to every piece of social policy legislation passed by Congress in the last two decades. The State Grants for Assistive Technology, PAAT program, National Technical Assistance grants, and the National Internet Site ensure that individuals with disabilities access the assistive technology they need to receive a high-quality education and obtain competitive integrated employment. For many, access to accessible and assistive technologies is the difference between dependence and independence, lives in their community or lives in institutions.

With significantly limited funds, Protection and Advocacy agencies have been able to make a major impact on the lives of children and adults with disabilities who need assistive and accessible technology. Twenty-nine PAAT programs receive a minimum allotment of just \$50,000. That \$50,000 is used to provide information and referrals, offer individual and systemic advocacy services, and conduct trainings for children and adults with disabilities. The PAAT program staff is integral to ensuring children and adults with disabilities have access to critically needed assistive technology, but on average, the current level of funding has made it possible to only employ approximately one full-time and one part-time advocate per Protection and Advocacy agency.

The PAAT program is highly successful, but the scope of its reach is significantly limited by its current resources. In order to meet the requirements of its directives and serve eligible populations, additional funding is critical. Given the level of demand for services, and the increasing role that technology is playing in society, it is imperative that PAAT funding is increased so individuals with a disability can live in their communities and be economically self-sufficient.

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