

# ADVOCACY

*People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter*



## How Many Stars in the Flag?

*By Quinn Thomas*

Some Americans don't have access to the same rights as others. This goes double for those living in the territories-- islands that are under U.S. rule but not states yet.

In April, the Supreme Court decided that people living in the territories do not have the right to disability benefits that people living in the states have. A Puerto Rican man moved to New York as an adult, received SSI for years after he later became disabled, and then moved back to Puerto Rico to care for his aging wife. His Social Security payments continued automatically, and when the government realized this, he was sued for \$28,000 in back payments.

This court decision has made this the policy

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **PEOPLE FIRST SUMMER PICNIC**

July 8, 3:00, Courageous Acres, 12701 Waterville-Swanton Road, Whitehouse. Anyone can come.

#### **SATURDAY UNIFIED BOWLING LEAGUE**

July 16, 10:00, New Glass Bowl Lanes, 5133 Telegraph Road, Toledo. This is an informational meeting for I/DD people and anyone who wants to bowl in the 2022/2023 season.

#### **FINANCIAL Q&A DINNER**

July 27, 5:30. Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities, 1154 Larc Lane, Toledo. Free dinner and information about how SSI works.

for Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands, but not the Northern Mariana Islands, because of a special legal status they have. The Supreme Court decided this was not racial discrimination, because they justified it with tax expenses. If the decision was based on taxes everywhere, though, six states also wouldn't qualify.

This issue is related to the Insular Cases, which are the court rulings from the early 1900s that decided people living in the territories were "alien races" and that the Constitution did not apply there. For example, the territories have no representation in Congress, no right to vote for the president, no citizenship sometimes, and are sometimes denied the right to trial by jury.

Not everyone in the islands wants statehood. Some want to be their own countries again. But decades of American rule have made that

difficult, even if it was allowed.

In the states, the maximum monthly SSI payment is \$794. In Puerto Rico, the maximum payment is \$77. In order to qualify, you can only make \$65 a month. The difference is the lack of federal funding.

Territories can become states. Every state was once a territory or a colony. The last territory to become a state was Hawai'i in 1959, and then the American flag was updated to have 50 stars instead of 49. There is one star for every state, and this is why the U.S. has had 27 different flags since its founding. Every time a new state is added, a new star is added. New flags are always released on the Fourth of July.

1837 Great Star Flag



## OUR NEXT MEETING

July 21st at the Ability Center-- 5605 Monroe Street, Sylvania. The meeting will run from 6:00-7:30 and the fee is \$5, or \$50 for twelve months.

Our guest lecturer, Katie Shelley, will speak about what accommodations you can expect out in the community and how to access them.