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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2010

Representative Debbie Phillips Honored By OACB As Legislator Of The Year

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A legislator from Southeast Ohio was honored as the “legislator of the year” by a statewide organization that supports all 88 *County Boards of Developmental Disabilities* in providing services and supports to individuals with disabilities.

State Representative Debbie Phillips was introduced to the about 600 participants at the 27th annual *Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) of Developmental Disabilities Convention* by Eric Young, superintendent of the *Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities* and Dan Schoonover, a self-advocate from Athens County. Representative Phillips represents areas of Athens, Meigs, Morgan and Washington Counties.

The award was given Dec. 2 at the Hilton Hotel at Easton.

In introducing Representative Phillips, Young noted that Debbie Phillips began working and helping people with developmental disabilities long before she won her state representative race.

“During her tenure as an Athens City councilmember, she helped make the city of Athens more accessible for people with disabilities by serving as the Council Liaison to the *Athens City Commission on Disabilities*,” Young said.

Representative Phillips immediately became active in removing the words “mental retardation” from the name of all County Boards of Developmental Disabilities as she introduced HB 118, the companion bill to Senate Bill 79 which struck the words “mental retardation” from the *Ohio Revised Code*.

Representative Phillips was just elected to her second term in the House, and has been named Minority Whip for 2011.

Young read a letter written by many of the people with developmental disabilities who expressed their appreciation for Representative Phillips, who quickly became a favorite friend of individuals with developmental disabilities from her region.

“Debbie is an awesome legislator. She listened to our stories about why we wanted to remove MR from current language. She seemed to understand the hurt and pain that we felt when we were the “R” word names,” Young read.

While thanking the *OACB* for the award, Representative Phillips noted that the self-advocates from Athens County were a “shining example of how citizens can make changes for the good” in Ohio.

“In today’s environment, it is more important than ever to stay involved. Your stories do make a difference,” she said.

Representative Phillips also encouraged people attending the convention to contact her office if they had ideas on how to make Ohio a better place, noting the self-advocates were one of the first groups to contact her when she was elected. “They made a trip to the Statehouse, and very articulately let me know how I could help them,” she said.

The “legislator of the year” award is presented annually to an elected or appointed official who exhibits high accomplishments in legislative leadership for people with developmental disabilities.

“Representative Phillips has shown herself to be a friend to everyone who cares about people with developmental disabilities,” said Dan Ohler, *OACB* Executive Director.

“It is our pleasure to honor Representative Phillips for her hard work. We appreciate the time and respect she shows not only individuals with developmental disabilities, but those of us who work to enhance the lives and opportunities of the disabled,” Ohler said.

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CAPTION:

Representative Debbie Phillips was honored as the “legislator of the year” at the annual OACB Convention. Pictured are Eric Young (superintendent, Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities); Representative Phillips; Dan Schoonover (Athens County self-advocate), and Dan Ohler (OACB Executive Director).