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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

DATE:

4/24/97NUMBER OF SHEETS TO FOLLOW: 1

TO:

John Koplar

ADDRESSEE'S FAX #:

456-5360

ADDRESSEE'S CONFIRMATION #:

456-2223

FROM:

Ben TyleSENDER'S FAX #: 202-622-0073

SENDER'S CONFIRMATION #: 202-622-2735

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/COMMENTS:

I am pleased to report that we are developing a feature that is intended to make it easier to verify the denomination of United States currency. The feature should prove helpful to everyone, but especially to older persons and individuals with low vision. It will appear first on newly designed \$50 bills, which will be issued later this year. These follow last year's new series of \$100 bills, which were redesigned to add new security features to thwart counterfeiters. The old designs remain legal tender.

John,
There may be a little
more coming on this -- but
here is a down-payment.
— Ben

Copy to Diana + return

Diana - Plan review

+ call me.

Elena



PRESIDENT'S
COMMITTEE
ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES

To: Vicki Radd
Chief of Staff's Office

From: Tony Coelho
Chairman

Subject: Follow-up on the Disability Appointees Meeting with Erskine Bowles and our Luncheon Meeting of last Friday

Date: 12 March 1997

As we discussed last week there are several items that the White House can move ahead on immediately that would enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and make some progress on other issues, i.e.;

- government wide expansion of DOD's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program,
- directing Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau to start tracking the monthly employment rates of people with disabilities,
- using the President's Committee's Workforce Recruitment Program to hire a summer college intern with a disability within the White House,
- using the bully pulpit of the White House to insure that people with disabilities and particularly minorities with disabilities are not excluded from the jobs programs initiated through welfare reform and that families with members who are disabled are not weakened and driven further into poverty through welfare reform, and
- continuing to work with the blind community to get a resolution to the \$50 note issue before the issuing of the new \$50 note.

A brief memo on each of these is attached, explaining what steps need to be taken at the White House to accomplish these items (basically just the President saying do it, preferably by an Executive Order with a lot of good publicity).

Shortly, I will copy you with a letter that Marca Bristo and I are sending to Erskine Bowles as a

follow-up to last week's meeting. This letter will mention the above points and encourage him to

move ahead with the Executive Order we discussed. Attached is a revised Executive Order that would include most of the above points and is reworked to avoid any appearances of quotas. The other appointees and I feel very strongly that all of the concerned agencies need to look at the entire fabric of their programs to insure that people with disabilities are integrated and effectively served. Historically, this has not been the case, particularly in such agencies as the Department of Labor, Department of Commerce, and the Small Business Administration where employment and economic development programs are run. Without a Presidential directive, it is doubtful these large bureaucracies will act any differently than they have in the past. The Executive Order that we appointees propose would also demonstrate to the disability community that the President is sincere about moving their issues forward and empowering them into the economic and social mainstream. Right now that is not evident.

Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program - Governmentwide Expansion

Background

The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP), a centrally funded program in the Department of Defense (DoD) established to cover the cost of assistive technology and accommodations, is viewed as a model in the Federal government. Due to its success, there is a strong interest in expanding CAP to service the entire Federal government.

Discussion

The Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD) and the President's Domestic Policy Advisor have visited the CAP. Discussion included the benefits of a centrally funded program:

- o Allows managers to hire people with disabilities without the cost of accommodations being an issue.
- o Bulk purchasing reduces cost of providing accommodations.
- o Assistive technology experts review each accommodation request for appropriateness and electronic compatibility.
- o Acquisitions are processed efficiently because the program staff is knowledgeable about products, systems, and availability of assistive technology and services.

The Department of Defense has filled over 10,000 requests and accommodations since the inception of CAP in 1990. This program has reduced the cost of workers compensation and disability retirement, increased telecommuting opportunities for employees with disabilities, and established a Technology Evaluation Center (CAPTEC) at the Pentagon that allows employees and supervisors to evaluate and select reasonable accommodations.

The DoD is well situated to manage a Governmentwide program:

- o The leadership supports this very successful program.
- o DoD has 40% of the Federal employees with disabilities.
- o DoD and CAP currently provides assistive equipment and services to other Federal agencies participating in the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, co-sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the PCEPD.
- o DoD participates in public and private forums that encourage the development of technology to incorporate universal design and benefits for people with disabilities.

Recommendations

The DoD will serve as the Executive Agent for the CAP expansion. The funds to expand the program will be held by Defense Medical Information Management (DMIM) which is a field activity of the office of the Secretary of Defense. The CAP is currently operating with a two million dollar annual budget. An additional seven million dollars will provide the needed funding to serve other Federal agencies. CAP will also require work years for an additional five Federal employees.

Disability Employment Data Collection

Background

For some time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' primary technique for tracking the labor force participation rate of people with disabilities has been their once a year, or March Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). During a May 13, 1996 meeting involving PCEPD Chairman Tony Coelho, EEOC Commissioner Paul Miller, BLS Commissioner Katharine Abraham and their respective staff, all agreed that the once a year CPS disability employment question currently in use is inappropriate and that a new one needs to be devised. Moreover, the data that this question has collected has probably misinformed the public on true employment rate of people with disabilities.

The net result of this meeting was a commitment to research and field test a new question or questions and to work towards the eventual goal of including this improve question or questions on disability in every monthly CPS -- not just annually (the March Supplement), as is the current practice.

Later that year, in a speech before the Annual Conference of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, President Clinton reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to this effort. In a subsequent speech at Gallaudet University, then Secretary Reich added his intention to make this happen.

Discussion

Current national disability employment data collection at both BLS and Census fails to recognize the advances that the Nation has made with the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). People with disabilities are now a protected class. People with disabilities are no longer defined by their inability to work, the current paradigm in favor at these agencies. This entrenchment is systemic and requires more than speeches to bring it up-to-date.

Recommendations

The following actions need to be taken.

1. BLS, in consort with the Census Bureau, needs to research and field test a question or questions which more accurately define the disabled population and their employment experiences. This research should be done in consort with the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Council on Disability, EEOC, and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The reason for this suggested consultation is the need to insure a coordination of current disability policy with data collection. In a post-ADA environment, the statistical paradigm currently in practice at both BLS and Census fails to recognize adequately current disability policy. The involvement of the aforementioned disability related agency will help to close this gap.

2. Once a new question or questions have been researched and field tested, BLS needs to manifest its responsibilities to people with disabilities by incorporating the new question(s) into their monthly CPS. In addition, BLS needs to continue to implement their responsibilities to track the employment of people with disabilities through data analysis (e.g. articles in their "Monthly Labor Review"), press releases, public statements and other demonstrations of their responsibility to monitor the employment of people with disabilities.

Given the institutional inertia that needs to be overcome in order to achieve these results, an Executive Order or similar directive is believed to be needed.

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT



PROGRAM *for college students with disabilities*

A program co-sponsored by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and the U. S. Department of Defense

This program is designed to help employers meet their summer hiring needs with talented college students with disabilities.

FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

JANUARY 1, 1997

TO ALL EMPLOYMENT RECRUITERS:

For the first time ever, YOU have the opportunity to tap into one of the Federal Government's *best kept secrets* - - **THE WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM (WRP)**. Established in 1975 as the Federal Recruitment Program (FRP), this program provides recruiters with free access to more than 1000 postsecondary students with disabilities who are seeking summer job opportunities to enhance their employment potential after graduation.

Why is this program being made available to non-government entities? With the continued downsizing of government, fewer and fewer job opportunities are available for the hundreds of postsecondary students with disabilities who are eager to gain valuable work experience in some of the hottest job tracks in this economy - - engineering, science, personnel, business, accounting, and clerical support.

To gain access to this valuable source of summer manpower, call **1-800-526-7234**. When you call, an employment specialist at the President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network (JAN) will customize a listing of students to meet your hiring needs. Each listing will include students names, career area(s), college attending (some of the finest campuses including U.Cal - Berkeley, William and Mary, Penn State, Stanford University - - a total of 142 colleges participating this year), home state, and campus phone number. Each student has been **pre-screened** by trained recruiters and was selected based on maturity, communication skills, and qualifications. Call today to receive your listing!

People with Disabilities and Welfare Reform and Other Initiatives

In his State of the Union message, the President announced several new initiatives in the area of education and welfare reform. The President missed key opportunities to move the concerns of people with disabilities forward and to illuminate their problems and indicate that they are capable and desiring to step forward as part of the economic mainstream. People with disabilities are probably the only group of people in the country who want to pay taxes, of course they need work and an earned income first. The point is they want to step forward and contribute and be valued and empower themselves into the economic mainstream.

When the President and members of his Administration speak of the new education initiatives they need to speak about what they can do for people with disabilities and their families. People with disabilities and their families do stand to benefit from some of the generic education initiatives.

In the Welfare Reform Implementation Initiatives, the President has repeatedly made the point that "able-bodied" folks on welfare should be working, thereby implying that "non-able-bodied" (i.e. disabled) folks on welfare need not be working. This implication runs counter to what people with disabilities want. It also is counter to the ADA and other civil rights-based notions that people with disabilities deserve equal opportunity and can and should benefit from the job training and education that will be made part of welfare reform.

These problems above come from a deeply ingrained societal and family miss conceptions that people with disabilities are not capable and need to be protected and taken care of. This is particularly true in some of our minority communities, which in large part explains the exceptionally high unemployment rate of minorities with disabilities. We all too often hold disability as a tragedy or a misgiving or an inadequacy. This is only true if we say it is. The reality is that disability is a common occurrence within the human condition, and has no bearing on an individual's unique abilities and absolutely nothing to do with what it is to be a human being and a citizen. These attitudes absolutely needs to start shifting in the Nation's psyche. The President has the unique opportunity and ability to help make this shift occur by using the bully pulpit of his office to properly integrate people with disabilities into these important reforms and initiatives.

Besides appropriately speaking about people with disabilities in the education and welfare reform initiatives, the President could direct the appropriate agencies to carry out these initiatives in a way that is consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA so that individuals with disabilities and families can have equal opportunity to realize the full promise of Welfare Reform, i.e. the opportunity to work their way out of poverty while keeping their families healthy, safe and intact.

The New \$50 Bill and Persons with Low Vision or Blind

Background

All currency is very difficult to use for people who have low vision or blind. The Department of the Treasury is intending to issue a new \$50 bill. With the assistance of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Department of Treasury called together key organizations representing people with low vision and/or blind to discuss what can be done to make the new \$50 bill accessible to the folks they represent.

Low Vision Feature

About two weeks ago, the Washington Post reported on the "Federal Page" the status of the Low Vision feature and the new currency. Bureau of Engraving and Printing spokesman Larry Felix indicated the new \$50 note would become available later this year, late summer or early fall.

Although the question of dealing with the blind is yet to be addressed, it is a plus that the Administration is making the currency accessible to low vision Americans for the first time in our history.

Next Steps for People who are Blind

During the process of consultation, the groups made their position clear: Helping low vision Americans is a good first step, but they could not support it as a last step. Action should be taken to make the currency accessible to the blind.

As of yet, there is no settled approach for this problem. Some countries perforate their currency, or cut corners, to help blind persons determine which denomination they are holding. Canada distributes optical readers for free to their blind population.

It is important to get a commitment to going forward to solve this problem, through research and through committing to a deadline for action. This must be done before the \$50 note takes its place or there will be much negative political fall out.

Recommendation

It would be prudent to hold a ceremony/press conference, prior to the issuance of the new \$50 dollar bill to: 1. Have the President and Treasury announce the new \$50 note and its features for persons with low vision; and 2) Announce the commitment to move forward immediately with research on how best to make currency accessible to blind persons and commit to a deadline for action, not only on the research, but the implementation of the research results as well. Of course the White House and Treasury would want to include appropriate members of the disability community in this ceremony/press conference announcement.

DRAFT #8 -- 3/12/97

Memorandum

To: (List agency heads for the departments and agencies listed in Section 2 of the Order)

From: President Clinton

Subject: Executive Order Establishing a Goal for the Employment of People with Disabilities

Date: (mm/dd/97)

The Order accompanying this Memorandum establishes a national goal for the employment of people with disabilities and directs the key executive branch agencies charged therein to set in place the requisite policies and actions to achieve this goal.

People with disabilities are at least twice as likely as people without disabilities to be unemployed. At the end of 1994, 19.5 percent of the population aged 18-64, or 30.7 million people, had a disability. Of these, 14.5 million had a severe limitation and were employed at the rate of only 24.7 percent. The artificially low employment rate of people with disabilities poses a cost to society in excess of \$200 billion annually. This has been a long standing problem throughout the history of this country, and was a motivating factor in the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Additionally, the cost of many government subsidies is growing dramatically with the recent rapid expansion in the disability rolls, such as the Social Security disability benefit programs and workers' compensation insurance programs. Thousands of working adults with disabilities and their families also will be affected by Welfare Reform and should have an equal opportunity to realize its full promise, including the opportunity to work and keep their families healthy, safe and intact. More importantly, many individuals trapped in these programs seek to survive on poverty level subsistence and have little opportunity to contribute to and participate in our economy. We must work to change Federal policies and programs.

The Social Security Administration now pays more than \$36 billion a year in disability insurance benefits to 4.5 million disabled workers, and pays \$25 billion a year in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to more than 5 million low-income people with disabilities. These costs reflect only monetary benefits. When the Medicare and Medicaid costs associated with disability-based cash assistance are factored in, the Federal and State expenditures associated with our income support programs more than double. We know that less than 1 percent of the over 8 million SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries return to work to become income earning, tax paying citizens, and that an alarming percentage of children on disability benefits never transition off the rolls into work as they become adults. High percentages of individuals with disabilities, both on these and other income maintenance rolls as well as others without any supports, can and

want to work. However, to enable them to work, it is essential that government and industry work together to remove discrimination and the remaining significant barriers to employment for people with disabilities; including lack of appropriate access to health insurance, transportation, long-term services and supports, telecommunications, assistive technology, community services, and child care. Additionally, sufficient incentives and access to education, rehabilitation and job training services, job placement services, on-the-job supports, and fair and adequate wages must be available.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, along with other Federal, State and local civil rights laws which prohibit discrimination and mandate equal opportunity in the workforce, have set the framework for people with disabilities to compete effectively and fairly in our labor market. Recent statistics of the Census Bureau suggest a positive impact of the ADA on the employment rate of people with disabilities. Now we must eliminate the current policies and practices that do not encourage employment or actually deter employment and that conflict with the purposes of the ADA and other civil rights laws, and replace them with those which equip more of our people to work.

For example, innovative research and demonstration programs of the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services show that individuals with disabilities who were previously thought incapable of substantial, gainful employment, including individuals with mental retardation and other serious cognitive, sensory, psychiatric and physical disabilities, can in fact work full-time with the availability of natural supports, medical breakthroughs, school to work programs, better vocational rehabilitation and training, and technological innovations. The approach of the 21st century is ushering in powerful changes in technology and telecommunications systems, which are opening up more entrepreneurial and telecommuting opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These programs must be further explored and expanded. However, all of this will only work if the severe economic disincentives, health care barriers, and other barriers to work are replaced with real access to jobs and careers.

The budget recently submitted to Congress contains initiatives that would begin to reverse the trend of increasing dependence on government benefits by increasing the availability of health care insurance and rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities who want to leave the Social Security rolls to enter the workforce. This will be an important first step in the realigning of our Federal policies and programs to consistently support people with disabilities in working. Millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans with disabilities can become productive citizens if government programs and policies are designed to encourage their employment.

Executive Order
[number]
[month / day], 1997

**Goals 2006 for the Employment of People with Disabilities: A Renewed and Reinvigorated
Executive Branch Commitment**

This Order establishes a National goal for the employment of people with disabilities and directs the key executive branch agencies charged herein to set in place the requisite policies and actions to achieve this goal.

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, and in order to address the enumerated facts in the accompanying Memorandum and to support the goals articulated in the findings and purpose section of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of National Employment Goal for Individuals with Disabilities.

There is hereby established as a national goal an employment rate for all adult individuals with disabilities as close as possible to the employment rate of the general adult population. Consistent with this goal, and in accordance with Sections 2 and 3 of this Order, the Secretary of Labor in consultation with the Secretaries of the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration shall establish interim annual goals to increase the employment rate of working age individuals with disabilities during each year between the date of this Order and July 26, 2006, the 16th anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As defined herein, a person with a disability is a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity. This definition comes from, and is to be read consistent with, the first prong of the definition of "individual with a disability" that appears in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Section 2. Achievement of National Employment Goal.

(a) The U.S. Department of Labor, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Commerce, Department of Treasury, Department of Justice, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Defense, Federal Communications Commission, Office of Personnel Management, National Council on Disability, and President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities shall put policies and programs into place which achieve the national employment goal described in Section 1 of this Executive Order. Furthermore, under the direction of the Secretary of Labor, with the assistance of the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, the above named departments and

agencies shall coordinate their efforts and resources to eliminate employment barriers for persons with disabilities, such as discrimination and inadequate access to health care, consumer-driven long-term supports and services, transportation, housing, telecommunications, assistive technology, community services, child care, education, vocational rehabilitation, training services, and on-the-job supports. The above named departments and agencies shall also analyze all of their existing programs and policies to determine if changes, modifications and innovations of said programs and policies would encourage and provide incentives for the employment of people with disabilities.

(b) In achieving this National employment goal, the federal government shall be a model employer of people with disabilities. By July 26, 1998, the Office of Personnel Management and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission shall review all federal government personnel laws, regulations and policies and, as appropriate, shall recommend or implement changes necessary to improve federal employment for people with disabilities. This review shall include personnel practices and actions including: hiring, promotion, benefits, retirement, workers' compensation, retention, and layoffs and reductions in force. Additionally, the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program is expanded to serve all government agencies, and appropriations shall be sought within the Department of Defense's budget to adequately fund the program.

(c) The Social Security Administration and the Department of Treasury, in cooperation with the National Council on Disability and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, shall design and implement innovative programs that provide economic and other incentives to both employers and individuals with disabilities to encourage persons with disabilities to leave the Social Security and other income maintenance rolls or to avoid enrollment in those rolls altogether.

(d) The Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services shall work with the States and others to ensure the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act is carried out as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act so that individuals with disabilities and their families can have equal opportunity to realize the full promise of Welfare Reform, i.e. the opportunity to work their way out of poverty while keeping their families healthy, safe and intact.

(e) The Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, as well as the Small Business Administration, shall develop and carry out strategies for assisting low income individuals, including people with disabilities, to create small businesses and micro enterprises to provide consumer driven personal assistance and other work related supports. This effort shall use the full buying power of the Federal Government to achieve the twin vital aims of putting people on welfare and individuals with disabilities to work. Additionally, the Department of Commerce and Small Business Administration shall develop and implement small business and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals with disabilities that have a significant effect on the ability of such individuals to develop and sustain successful small business and entrepreneurial activities.

(f) All efforts taken by federal departments and agencies under this Section 2 of this Executive Order shall further partnerships and cooperation with public and private sector employers, disability advocacy groups, organized labor, veteran service organizations, and state and local governments whenever such partnerships and cooperation are possible and would promote the employment and gainful economic activities of individuals with disabilities. These efforts should also concentrate on the full array of employment opportunities; including benefits, types of jobs, job promotion, part-time and episodic work, and education and re-training programs.

Section 3. Measurement of Results.

(a) No more than one year after the effective date of this Executive Order, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor and the Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce, in cooperation with the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, National Council on Disability, and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, shall design and implement a statistically reliable and accurate method to measure the employment rate of working age individuals with disabilities on a monthly basis.

(b) By January 1 of each year this Executive Order is in effect, the Secretaries of Labor shall report to the President the steps taken by each department and agency listed in Section 2 to achieve this national goal on a biannual basis. The first report shall be due on July 26, 1998, and it shall articulate the government-wide plan to achieve the goal and the statistical data necessary to measure progress towards the goal. Subsequent biannual reports shall detail progress towards the goal and indicate any adjustments that may be necessary in the overall plan and strategy to achieve the goal by July 26, 2006.

by the middle of next week. Although this would likely not stand alone as an announcement, perhaps we could give this to several reporters prior to transmittal.

However,
Ellen has
several cameras
use a th

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. **Treasury's Savings Bonds Change.** *I raised this in this morning's strategy meeting in Don's office, and Sylvia thinks Rubin should do a press hit with this (Larry's memo from Monday) on April 29. We are tasked with dealing with Treasury on it. With your okay, I will call Ben Nye, with whom I have discussed this.* *[blow up savings bond - pitch on savings products savings]*
2. **Homeownership Week.** The week is set for June 7-14, and might be a good opportunity for involvement by the President, Vice President, and a Cabinet rollout. Ellen and I discussed this with HUD, and will provide you with a draft scheduling request shortly.
3. **Jumpstart Event in Boston on April 26.** I have submitted a scheduling request from you to the First Lady's office. It was rejected.
4. **Urban League Annual Conference.** We submitted a scheduling request (August 3-6).
5. **Service Summit.** We should be sure to work America Reads and college tutoring into the President's remarks.
6. **Clean Drinking Water.** *I raised this in this morning's strategy meeting in Don's office, and Sylvia thought that we should leak this (state-by-state breakdown of \$725 million Clean Drinking Water State Revolving Fund in our FY98 budget proposal) to the AP perhaps next Sunday. Let's discuss.* *(Brown per conference)*
7. **Disability.** Also from Don's strategy meeting, we are aiming for a May 3 disability event focusing on Web Access (Kalil's deal) and some other components. We are to work with DPC on this. Jake, Tom, and I will meet with Weinstein et al at DPC. Let's discuss.

set up mtg Monday

Roger Anderson

→ braked

fingerprints print diff't

bigger concept (Gene)

- web access
- lead & other camouflage

Diana Furtura

6-5570

Bill White

political appointments met w/ (Erik) the
• Winkler
• Elana

✓ Treasury a "go" on this (Ben: Howard)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM

To: Maria Echaveste
cc: Gene Sperling, Anne Lewis, Sylvia Mathews
From: Tom Kalil *TAK*
Re: Web Accessibility Initiative
Date: April 10, 1997

Thanks for your interest in the Web Accessibility Initiative. We got a nice front page story in the *San Jose Mercury News* business section, and a number of articles in the technical press. A number of disabilities groups, including the World Institute on Disabilities and the American Federation of the Blind, participated in the launch.

The National Science Foundation has also expressed an interest in launching a broader research initiative in this area.

I'm attaching a copy of the President's statement, the press story, and the World Wide Web Consortium press release. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 4, 1997

Congratulations on the launch of the Web Accessibility Initiative -- an effort to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the Internet's World Wide Web.

New information and communications technologies can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities, but only if such technologies are designed from the beginning so that everyone can use them. Given the explosive growth in the use of the World Wide Web for publishing, electronic commerce, lifelong learning and the delivery of government services, it is vital that the Web be accessible to everyone. The Web Accessibility Initiative will develop the tools, technology, and guidelines to make it possible to display information in ways that are available to all users.

I commend the World Wide Web Consortium, industry sponsors, and the Yuri Rubinski Foundation for launching this important project. I am pleased that the Department of Education will provide funding for the Web Accessibility Initiative, and that the National Science Foundation is considering expanding its support for research and development in this area. My Administration is committed to working with these and other organizations to ensure that this innovative project is a success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bill Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Web reaches out to the disabled

Drive's goal: BY DAVID L. WILSON
Mercury News Staff Writer

**Make Web
accessible
to people
with
impairments.**

Over the next five years, the World Wide Web and its descendants are likely to become a primary means of getting information. The prospect has some folks terrified.

People with vision impairments can't see the graphics that are critical navigation aids on the Web. People who have hearing difficulties can't make use of increasingly common sound files.

To combat that problem, an international consortium Monday announced a three-year program to make the medium friendlier to people with disabilities. Dubbed the Web Accessibility Initiative, it's a collaborative effort, among the World Wide Web Consortium that sets technological standards, software and hardware developers, and government.

President Clinton helped launch the program. "Given the explosive growth in the use of the World Wide Web for publishing, electronic commerce, life-long learning and the delivery of government services, it is vital that the Web be accessible to everyone," he said in a statement released Monday.

The issue came to a head because of the widespread adoption of Web technologies known as intranets by corporations.

Today, many employees use Web browsing software to access their company's computer systems. That's a particular problem for some people with visual impairments, who have only been able to enter the workforce by using computers equipped with technologies that speak text on the screen aloud. On the Web, many such systems simply won't work.

"A lot of blind people are getting hysterical about this," said Norm Coombs, who is himself blind. He is the chairman of Equal Access to Software Information.

According to some estimates, as much as 15 percent of the U.S. population cannot use a computer unassisted because of some disability.

The Web access initiative is funded in part with \$300,000 in federal money from the Education Department, with hopes of another \$500,000 from the National Science Foundation. In addition, a number of major corporate players — including International Business Machines Corp., Microsoft Corp. and Riverland Holding — have signed on as sponsors and have pledged up to \$50,000 annually for the next three years in support of the project.

Inadequate technology is only part of the problem. Members of the initiative will also have to change the culture of the Web, where developers make full use of flamboyant multimedia tools but don't think about people who can't make use of the latest technologies.

Many sites are built using capabilities specific to certain brands of Web browsing software; visitors are greeted with messages suggesting that they change Web browsers if they're having a problem.

"That's like McDonald's having a sign on the drive-through that says 'You'll enjoy your food best in a Cadillac,'" Coombs said.

The initiative will largely target developers, urging them to build sites that are accessible to everyone and providing them with new tools that will prompt them to make certain fixes, like adding a caption to a picture.

Tom Kalil, senior director of the White House National Security Council, said the government is committed to assisting in the effort, by acting as a cheerleader and by making sure government Web sites are fully accessible.

"We're going to make sure we're a model," he said.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WORLD WIDE WEB CONSORTIUM (W3C) LAUNCHES INTERNATIONAL WEB ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVE

W3C Leads Program to Make the Web Accessible for People with Disabilities

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts, USA -- April 7, 1997 -- The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) today announced the launch of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) to promote and achieve Web functionality for people with disabilities. Endorsed by The White House and W3C Members, the WAI will involve the establishment of an International Program Office (IPO) responsible for developing software protocols and technologies, creating guidelines for the use of technologies, educating the industry, and conducting research and development.

The W3C will be working with government, industry leaders, Web developers, content providers, and non-profit organizations, including the Yuri Rubinsky Insight Foundation, to lead the development efforts of the newly created Initiative.

“Worldwide, there are more than 750 million people with disabilities. As we move towards a highly connected world, it is critical that the Web be usable by anyone, regardless of individual capabilities and disabilities,” said Tim Berners-Lee, Director of the W3C and inventor of the World Wide Web. “The W3C is committed to removing accessibility barriers for all people with disabilities — including the deaf, blind, physically challenged, and cognitive or visually impaired. We plan to work aggressively with government, industry, and community leaders to establish and attain Web accessibility goals.”

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According to Jim Miller, W3C Technology & Society Domain Leader, the World Wide Web Consortium will be the central point for the formation of accessibility goals, and will also be an advocate for people with disabilities to Web developers and content providers. In addition, the IPO will be housed and fully integrated within the W3C, with technologists working to ensure that Consortium-developed protocols meet or exceed accessibility goals.

The W3C's technology development will focus initially on protocols and data formats aimed at making the Web itself more accessible. W3C will develop descriptive video and captioning enhancements to HTML and XML, develop extensions to CSS that will support speech output, and work on the negotiation of user agent features for HTTP and PEP.

"In addition to technology development, the Web Accessibility Initiative is designed to provide the infrastructure for education and outreach programs," said Mike Paciello, Executive Director, Yuri Rubinsky Insight Foundation. "Through strategic international partnerships, particularly with disability organizations, the YRIF will insure that content providers, application developers, and users are well educated in the area of accessible Web design."

The W3C will provide funds and staff to the Initiative's International Program Office, with additional resources provided by commercial, non-profit and government organizations. W3C Member organizations that have committed funding to the Initiative have been designated "charter sponsors."

The project begins this week with a WAI workshop held on Sunday, April 6, 1997. The International Project Office and developments for the overall project will begin in the summer of 1997.



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About the World Wide Web Consortium

The W3C was created to develop common protocols that enhance the interoperability and promote the evolution of the World Wide Web. It is an industry consortium jointly run by the MIT Laboratory for Computer Science (LCS) in the USA, the National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control (INRIA) in France and Keio University in Japan. Services provided by the Consortium include: a repository of information about the World Wide Web for developers and users; sample code implementations to embody and promote standards; and various prototype and sample applications to demonstrate use of new technology. To date 170 organizations are Members of the Consortium.

For more information about the World Wide Web Consortium, see <http://www.w3.org/>

About the MIT Laboratory for Computer Science

Now in its third decade, MIT LCS is dedicated to the invention, development and understanding of information technologies expected to drive substantial technical and socio-economic change. The LCS has helped information technology grow from a mere curiosity to 10 percent of the industrial world's economies by its pioneering efforts in interactive computing, computer networking, distributed systems and public key cryptography. LCS members and alumni have started some thirty companies and have pioneered the Nubus, the X-Window System, the RSA algorithm, the Ethernet and spreadsheets.

For more information about the MIT Laboratory for Computer Science, see <http://www.lcs.mit.edu/>



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About the Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique

INRIA, the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control, is a public-sector scientific institute charged with conducting both fundamental and applied research, and with transferring research results to industry. INRIA is made up of five Research Units located at Rocquencourt (near Paris), Rennes, Sophia Antipolis, Nancy and Grenoble. Areas of current research include information processing, advanced high speed networking, structured documents, and scientific computation.

For more information about INRIA, see <http://www.inria.fr/>

About Keio University

Keio University is one of Japan's foremost computer science research centers and universities. It is one of the oldest private universities in Japan, and has five major campuses around Tokyo. Keio University has been promoting joint research projects in cooperation with industry, government and international organizations, and is now becoming one of the research leaders for network and digital media technology.

For more information on Keio University, see <http://www.keio.ac.jp/>

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Organizations Supporting the Web Accessibility Initiative:

“The WAI initiative proposed by the W3C is of prime importance as it will create better conditions for the development of standardized services and transparent access to services for everyone. BrailleNet therefore supports fully the WAI initiative.”

-Dominique Burger, Coordinator

Consortium BrailleNet

- Association Nationale des Parents d'Enfants Aveugles
- Ateliers Formation et Informatique
- EuroBraille
- Federation de Aveugles de France
- Universite Pierre et Marie Curie

“The industry-driven initiative will go far to advance the accessibility of the Internet and its hardware, software and services, to people with disabilities. Complementing the efforts of NCAM [National Center for Accessible Media] and its like-minded colleagues across the country, the W3C and its members are ideally suited to addressing accessibility issues during the initial design stages of Web technology. Their education and outreach goals will help assure information access equality for all consumers.”

-Larry Goldberg

**The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), WGBH
National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM)**

“The European Blind Union [EBU] recognizes that access to information is a pre-requisite to visually impaired people’s integrity and independent living, and this issue has been consistently high on its agenda over the last few years. The Web plays, and will play, an ever increasing role in our everyday lives, and it is vital that the visually impaired are not excluded from the Web culture. Therefore, EBU can only welcome and support WAI in that it intends to address Web access problems faced by the visually impaired and thereby pave the way for their active participation in tomorrow’s information society.”

-Mokrane Boussaid, Director

European Blind Union (EBU)



“The Graphic Communications Association has made a long term commitment to the development and fostering of technologies, standards, and methodologies for the publishing industry. GCA membership represents the broad spectrum of organizations involved in publishing, content management and information dissemination, from Boeing Commercial Airplane to Time, Inc. for example. Through its membership GCA provides a high level coordination of numerous industry and global initiatives. By way of its continuing support of SGML and related standards, including XML, GCA is endeavored to support standards and technologies that provide universal access to information. Therefore, GCA is encouraged by the Web Accessibility Initiative. The World Wide Web offers a unique vehicle for global communication and information research. It offers a tremendous opportunity for accessibility to everyone, including the disabled. The technologies and advancements spearheaded by this initiative will provide more advanced, easier-to-use tools, and applications. But to make this happen, it must be a coordinated effort among many players. GCA views the WAI as providing this coordination and is willing to cooperate with other organizations to realize the potential benefits.”

-Marion Elledge

Graphic Communications Association (GCA)

“In Taiwan, both government and private sectors are working hard together trying to achieve the goal of 3 million Internet users by year 2000. [Population of Taiwan: 21 million] Of course, the handicapped people are not to be excluded in this NII program. The NII Steering Committee and Ministry of Economic Affairs have started a program specifically designed to help the people with disabilities use IT and Internet. Several leading universities, like TamKang University and TsinHua University, etc. are developing software and hardware tools to help people with disabilities access the Web. A Catholic Light & Salt Foundation is helping blind people access the Web. The parties working on various programs helping people with disabilities access the Web in Taiwan are very excited about the Web Accessibility Initiative. We are in the process of coordinating an effort to participate in WAI. We believe that we can make contribution to the WAI, especially in Chinese language specific applications for people with disabilities, and we would like to leverage the global resources available in WAI to benefit our people with disabilities.

-James Lee, Director, Internet Technology Division

Industrial Technology Research Institute, Taiwan



"It is certainly positive for the Web Consortium to think about the accessibility of disabled people particularly the visually impaired like our members. I fully support the initiative."

-Kin P Tsang, President
Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society

"It is our firm belief, based on previous research and numerous contacts with visually impaired persons, that the World Wide Web is the major source of information available (and largely accessible) for reading impaired people who have to rely on electronic reading. This advantage has to remain in the future too. Our groups therefore welcome the Web Accessibility Initiative and plan to cooperate with it on different levels, as members of the interest group but also as contributors to the Working Group on Technology Development. We sincerely hope that the Initiative can get the required funding to start working on a truly worldwide scale."

-Professor Jan Engelen
Director, **Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Research Group on Document Architecture**
Vice-President, **InfoVisie Foundation**

"The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation (NIDRR) extends formal congratulations to the W3C on the launch of the Web Accessibility Initiative on Sunday, April 6, 1997. Over the last two decades, NIDRR has recognized the need for accessibility of telecommunications for people with disabilities and commends you on this historic initiative."

-Katherine D. Seelman, Ph.D., Director
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

"The Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB] has recognized the vital role which the World Wide Web can play in enhancing the lives of visually impaired people through giving them access to communication and information in all areas of activity, thus leading to fuller integration into society, which is one RNIB's strategic goals. The Web Accessibility Initiative led by W3C is seen as the most effective way of moving closer to this goal by developing a global and unified approach to accessibility of Web content. For this reason RNIB supports fully this initiative and, in cooperation with other organizations of and for disabled people, will do everything possible to foster and promote the goals of the WAI."

-Professor Ian Bruce, Director General
Royal National Institute for the Blind, Great Britain