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Disabilities - Event 6/4

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THE CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION TAKES NEW STEPS TO INCREASE THE EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Today, at the ceremony to give the President's Award of the Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, President Clinton responded to an issue highlighted by Mrs. Gore earlier this year by signing an executive order ensuring that the federal government's has the same hiring and promotion standards for people with psychiatric disabilities as it has for people with other disabilities. He also challenged the Congress to pass the historic, bipartisan Work Incentives Improvement Act by July 26, the ninth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Since the beginning of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the American economy has added more than 18 million new jobs, and unemployment is at a 29-year low of 4.3 percent. Yet over 75 percent of individuals with psychiatric disabilities remain unemployed. The President's action, together with the new provisions in the Work Incentives Improvement Act will help to eliminate the institutional barriers that prevent individuals with psychiatric disabilities from bringing their enormous energy and talent to the workforce. Today, the President:

Signed an Executive Order Expanding Hiring Opportunities for People with Psychiatric Disabilities.

In January, Tipper Gore announced that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would explore measures to eliminate the stricter standards that are currently applied to job applicants who have psychiatric disabilities. Today, the President will sign an executive order that:

- Ensures that individuals with psychiatric disabilities are given the same hiring opportunities as persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation. The civil service rules will be changed to ensure that people with psychiatric disabilities are covered by the same hiring rules and authority used for individuals with other disabilities.
- Permits people with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity to acquire competitive civil service status after two years of successful service. This authority will allow adults with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity for conversion into the competitive civil service as employees with other disabilities.

Challenged Congress to Pass the Historic, Bipartisan Work Incentives Improvement Act. This historic new legislation, which has received overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate under the leadership of Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, Roth, and Moynihan and Representatives Lazio, Waxman, Bliley, and Dingell removes significant barriers to work for people with disabilities by improving access to health care through Medicaid; extending Medicare coverage for people with disabilities who return to work; and creating a new Medicaid buy-in demonstration to help people with a specific physical or mental impairment that is expected to lead to a severe disability without medical assistance. One of the biggest barriers to entering the workplace for individuals with disabilities is that, under current law, people with disabilities often become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they work, forcing them to choose between health care coverage and employment. Today, the President urged Congress to move swiftly to pass this important and long overdue legislation by July 26, the ninth anniversary of the ADA.

Signing Executive Order Expanding Hiring Opportunities for People with Psychiatric Disabilities. On January 14th, Tipper Gore announced that the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would explore measures to eliminate the stricter standards applied to federal hiring practices for people with psychiatric disabilities. Today, the President will sign an executive order modernizing these twenty-year-old rules which will:

- Ensure that individuals with psychiatric disabilities are given the same hiring opportunities as persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation. The civil service rules will be changed to ensure that people with psychiatric disabilities will be covered by the same kind of appointing authority as used for individuals with other disabilities.
- Permits people with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity to acquire competitive civil service status after two years of successful service. This authority will allow adults with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity for conversion into the competitive civil service as employees with other disabilities.

This action was recommended by the President's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities under the leadership of Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, chair, and Tony Coelho, vice chair as well as by OPM Director Janice R. Lachance, who chairs the Task Force's Committee on the Federal Government as a Model Employer.

**Q&A on Disability Employment Executive Order
June 4, 1999 -- DRAFT**

Q: What is the Executive Order the President is signing today?

A: Today, the President will sign an executive order modernizing twenty-year-old federal employment rules which apply stricter standards to people with psychiatric disabilities than people with other disabilities, an issue highlighted by Mrs. Gore earlier this year. The executive order will:

- Ensure that individuals with psychiatric disabilities are given the same hiring opportunities as persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation. The civil service rules will be changed to ensure that people with psychiatric disabilities will be covered by the same kind of appointing authority as used for individuals with other disabilities.
- Permits people with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity to acquire competitive civil service status after two years of successful service. This authority will allow adults with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunity for conversion into the competitive civil service as employees with other disabilities.

This action was recommended by Mrs. Gore as well as the President's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities under the leadership of Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, chair, and Tony Coelho, vice chair and OPM Director Janice R. Lachance, who chairs the Task Force's Committee on the Federal Government as a Model Employer.

Q: Why is this action important?

A: Mental illness is a disability like any other disability -- and helping Americans understand that is one of the goals of the White House Conference on Mental Health that the President, the First Lady, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore are hosting on Monday. With this action, the President is ensuring the federal government -- our nation's largest employer -- leads by example.

Q. How many persons with disabilities are currently employed by within the federal government?

A. As of September 30, 1998, there were 124,139 employees with disabilities executive branch (excluding postal workers), or 7.1 percent of the workforce.

Note: This is the number of people who voluntarily identified themselves as having a disability. Source: Office of Personnel Management.



Cynthia A. Rice

06/04/99 04:24:10 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARDS CEREMONY

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 4, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARDS CEREMONY

The East Room

3:05 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Jill. Secretary Hermann; Chairman Coehlo; Mr. Dart; to Janice LaChance, head of our Office of Personnel Management; ladies and gentlemen. I have looked forward to this day, and I am delighted to see you all here. I'll have more to say about the others who are up here with me in a moment.

This is my only opportunity to appear before the press today, so I hope you will also indulge me if I say a few words about the recent developments in Kosovo. For 72 days now we have been engaged with our allies in a difficult but just and necessary military campaign, with three simple goals: the return of over 800,000 innocent Kosovar refugees to their homes, with safety and self-government; the withdrawal of Serb forces; and the deployment of an international security force, with NATO at its core, to protect all the people of that shattered land.

Yesterday, the Serbian authorities indicated they would accept those conditions. Russian Special Envoy Chernomyrdin and Finnish President Ahtisaari played instrumental and courageous roles in making this possible. I am grateful to them, and so should all Americans be.

Tomorrow, military officials from NATO and Serbia will meet to work out the details of the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. This is the next necessary step for implementation of our conditions. I'm pleased that it will take place, and I hope the talks will proceed professionally and expeditiously.

As I said yesterday, our diplomatic and military efforts will continue until we see Serb forces begin to withdraw in a full-scale manner. Our experience in the Balkans teaches us that true peace can only come when progress in discussions is followed by progress on the ground.

At the same time, there is an enormous opportunity to be seized here, a chance to shift our focus from defeating something evil to building something good; a chance to work with our allies to bring a stable and prosperous and democratic southeastern Europe, in which people are never again singled out for destruction simply because of their religious faith, or their ethnic origin. This is a goal that has been worth fighting for over the last weeks, a goal which must be uppermost in our minds as we make sure our conditions are met; a goal we must work for with steadfast determination in the months and in the years to come.

And I believe that the overwhelming majority of Americans share this goal. We do not want our children to grow up in a world which is dominated by people who believe they can kill innocent civilians because of the way they worship God, or the way they were born.

Fifty years ago, Harry Truman, the very first President to present the awards that we present today, set a goal for our nation. I'd like to repeat it: to give every American with a disability the chance to play their full part in strengthening our nation and sharing the greatest satisfaction of American life, to be independent and self-supporting.

Today, we gather to honor three Americans whose efforts to bring more and more people with disabilities into the world of work have moved us closer to that great and just goal. Since the founding of our nation, work has been at the heart of the American Dream. Because millions of Americans have had the opportunity to work and to build better lives for themselves and their families, our nation is enjoying historic strength and prosperity. Through work, we reinforce the values that hold us together as a society -- the values of responsibility, perseverance, striving for the future.

And in so many ways, we define ourselves as Americans not only by our families and our hometowns, but by our work. Often, the first question Americans ask each other is not, who are your parents, or, where do you live -- but, what do you do. Today, still, there are too many Americans with disabilities who've never had the chance to answer that question. Even as we celebrate more than 18 million new jobs and a nationwide unemployment rate of 4.2 percent, the lowest in a generation, as the Secretary has said, 75 percent of Americans with disabilities remain unemployed. And of that number, 72 percent, almost three-quarters, say they want to go to work.

This is not just a missed opportunity for Americans with

disabilities. It's a missed opportunity for America. This is an era now of labor shortages, where companies go begging for employees they need to stay competitive in the global economy. And we simply cannot afford to ignore the potential of millions of potential workers simply because they have a disability.

One of the things I have spent a great deal of time on in the last year, particularly, is trying to work with my economic advisors on issues that only peripherally involve the disability community, but that you are a central part of resolving. And it is this: how can we continue to grow this economy and lift the standards of living of our people until we embrace everybody who has not participated in the recovery; keep the recovery going, which is already the longest peacetime recovery in history, and not have an explosion of inflation.

There are -- if you think about it, there are only, I would argue to you, three possible answers to that. You either have to get more workers who are unemployed, generally, in the society, into the work force so that they not only are helping themselves, but helping the rest of us by becoming consumers and taxpayers and growing the economy; you have to go to those discreet areas where whole areas have been left out of our economic growth; or you have to find more customers for America's goods and services around the world.

Therefore, I have continued to push the idea of the expansion of trade on fair and just terms. I have promoted the empowerment zones that the Vice President has so ably led our efforts in for the last six and a half years, and this New Markets Initiative, to reach into the rural areas, the urban communities, the Native American reservations where there has been almost no economic growth. We have cut the welfare rolls almost in half, trying to move able-bodied people from welfare to work.

The last big chunk of people in this country who could keep the economy going for all of us, with low inflation, are the Americans with disabilities -- who want to work, who can work, and who are not in the work force. Every American citizen should have a selfish interest in the pursuit of this goal in the most aggressive possible way. (Applause.)

As everybody here knows -- and Secretary Hermann already mentioned it -- one of the very largest obstacles to employment for Americans with disabilities is the fear that they'll lose their health insurance once they take a job -- that which is provided by the federal government. Not so very long ago, I went in February to New Hampshire and had a roundtable about this, where people were explicitly discussing this in graphic terms, giving -- through the press to the American people -- dollars-and-cents reports on what the consequences of this would be.

Under current law, many people with disabilities simply can't work and keep Medicare or Medicaid. For many Americans, medical bills literally cost thousands of dollars beyond what is typically covered by an employer's private insurance. For many Americans, their medical bills would be greater than their entire salary.

Therefore, we keep a lot of people out of the work force. But we don't save the federal government any money, because they're spending the money anyway, on the health care. So we deny opportunities to millions; we prevent the American economy from reaching its full potential; we don't save the Federal Treasury one red cent, because the health care money is being spent anyway.

Today, as a country, it is time to say that no American should have to choose between going to work and paying the medical bills. Last summer, and in the State of the Union, I asked Congress to free our fellow Americans from this unfair burden. The Work Incentive Improvement Act, sponsored by Senators Jeffords and Kennedy, Senators Roth and Moynihan, and a wide group of sponsors in both houses, from both parties, will do just that. There are, at last count, over 70 members of the Senate who have signed on to the bill.

There has been a lot of commentary lately about how hard it is to get legislation through the Congress, with the partisan divide. Well, there are a lot of issues on which Republicans and Democrats have honest disagreements. Thank goodness this is not one of them. (Applause.)

Because it is not one of them, because we already have over 70 people who say they will vote for this if they can just get a chance to vote for it on the floor of the Senate, I am confident that we can work together to pass the work incentives bill by July the 26th of this year, the 9th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. (Applause.)

We can celebrate that great, historic, bipartisan landmark by opening the doors of opportunity for millions of people even wider -- enabling more Americans with disabilities to join the proud ranks of working citizens.

There is more, I would argue, that we should do. In my balanced budget presented to the Congress, I proposed a \$1,000 tax credit to help people with disabilities afford special transportation technology, which you've already heard about, or personal assistance needed to make the transition to work. And we must double our efforts to make assistive technology, such as voice recognition software, mobile telephones, braille translators, more widely available. So I ask Congress to move forward with both of these proposals in my budget.

And today I am taking immediate action to give more

Americans with disabilities the opportunity to become part of the largest work force in America. On Monday, the First Lady, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore and I will be hosting a White House conference on mental health -- an area that has been a special concern, as I'm sure many of you know, to Mrs. Gore for many years. One of our goals is to help more Americans understand that mental illness is not a character flaw. It is a disability.

That is why today I am using my executive authority as President to strip away outdated barriers that keep people with psychiatric disabilities from serving America in our federal government, directing all federal agencies to provide applicants with mental illnesses the same opportunities as other applicants with disabilities to work for the United States of America. (Applause.)

As you know, and as we see here today, not only the government, but individual citizens can take action and make an enormous difference. The three citizens we honor today are proof of the difference one person can make, and I am proud to present these awards to each of them.

First, to Joyce Bender. Fifteen years ago, as Joyce lay in a hospital trauma unit, recovering from a near-fatal cerebral hemorrhage, she made a vow to give something back to the patients who were not so lucky. Through Bender Consulting Services, she's used her own expertise as a professional headhunter to place people with disabilities in high-wage, high-tech jobs.

She knows the demand for high-skill workers will only continue to grow, and she is determined to make sure people with disabilities will be ready to meet it. She's founded a new program to train even more people with disabilities in the high-tech skills that are the ticket to the world of the 21st century.

It's an honor to present this award to Joyce Bender. Joyce. (Applause.) (The award was presented.)

Next, to James Click, Jr. Over more than 30 years as a car dealer in California and Arizona, Jim Click has become an undisputed leader in his field. But he's also unrivalled in his commitment to extending opportunity to people with disabilities.

A few years ago, he discovered he could encourage more businesses to follow his lead by making it easier for them to find workers with the right skills. So he founded Linkages, which brings Tucson businesses and rehabilitation programs together to match qualified workers with disabilities to jobs in the private sector.

In a little over a year, more than 170 people have found work through Linkages. It's an honor to present this award to Jim Click, and hope others will follow his lead in every

community in the country. (Applause.) (The award was presented.)

Finally, to Laura Hershey. Laura has said, "Disability is not a tragedy. It is powerful."

By speaking her mind, and using her gifts as a writer to point out the shortcomings and the possibilities of our society, Laura has found the power to make the world a better place for people with disabilities. As head of a variety of disability organizations, and as a private citizen, she has fought to reform our Social Security, housing and transportation systems to better serve Americans living with disabilities.

Economic freedom and self-sufficiency for Americans with disabilities is her goal. I am confident she will not rest until she achieves it. And I am proud to present this third and final award to Laura Hershey. (Applause.) (The award was presented.)

So there you have them: a high-tech headhunter from Pittsburgh, a car dealer from Tucson, an activist from Denver. Now, if you didn't see them you might think, just by those descriptions, that these people have little in common. But they are bound together by their remarkable passion for empowering Americans with disabilities and helping all Americans to live closer to the ideal of equal opportunity for all. Each is, therefore, a true patriot.

President Truman once said, "We love our country ... because it offers us the chance to lead useful lives and to do what we can for those around us."

I thank each of you for reminding us that, really, those two things are two sides of the same coin. We cannot truly lead useful lives unless we also do what we can for those around us. This is a good day for America.

Thank you. God bless you. (Applause.)

END

3:20 P.M. EDT

Message Sent To:



Cynthia A. Rice

06/03/99 07:33:53 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Lisa M. Brown/OVP @ OVP
cc: J. Eric Gould/OPD/EOP
Subject: draft remarks

----- Forwarded by Cynthia A. Rice/OPD/EOP on 06/03/99 07:37 PM -----



June Shih

06/03/99 06:45:58 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc:
Subject: draft remarks

Draft 6/3/99 6:50 pm
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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS FOR PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AWARDS
THE WHITE HOUSE
JUNE 4, 1999**

Fifty years ago, President Harry Truman, the very first President to present these awards, set a goal for our nation: To give every American with a disability the chance – and I quote -- “to play their full part in strengthening our nation... [and]to share in the greatest satisfaction of American life – to be independent and self-supporting.”

Today, we gather to honor three Americans whose efforts to bring thousands of men and women with disabilities into the world of work have moved America ever closer to that great --and just – goal.

Since the founding of our nation, work has been at the heart of the American Dream. Because millions of Americans have had the opportunity to work and build better lives for themselves and their families, our nation is strong and prosperous. Through work, we reinforce the values that hold our society together – the values of responsibility, perseverance, striving for the future. And in so many ways, we Americans define ourselves, not only by our

families and hometowns, but by our work. Often, the first question we ask each other is not “Who are your parents?” or “Where do you live?” but “What do you do?”

Today, there are still too many disabled Americans who have never been allowed to answer that question, who have never had the chance to participate in that essential component of the American Dream. Even as we celebrate more than 18 million new jobs and a nationwide unemployment rate of x percent -- the lowest unemployment in a generation -- 75 percent of Americans with disabilities remain unemployed. And of those unemployed, 72 percent say they want to go to work.

This is not just a missed opportunity for the disabled. It is a missed opportunity for America. In an era of labor shortages, when companies go begging to fill positions they need to stay competitive in our global economy, we cannot afford to ignore millions of potential workers simply because they have a disability. Think of the loss to American industry, the economy, and even our Treasury. Tony Coehlo often likes to say that he represents the only group in America that actually wants to pay more taxes. If we are to sustain and build our prosperity, if we are to uphold our highest ideal of opportunity for all, then we as a nation must work harder to give all Americans the chance to experience the pride of going to work and earning a paycheck.

Today, one of the biggest obstacles to employment for many Americans with disabilities is the fear that they will lose their federal health insurance once they take a job. As many of you know, under current law, people with disabilities cannot work and keep Medicaid or Medicare coverage at the same time. For many disabled Americans, medical bills cost thousands of dollars beyond what is typically covered by an employer's private insurance. They have no choice but to stay out of the workforce, dependent on federal assistance.

This is not what America is about. This system denies opportunity to millions who are willing to take on the responsibility of work and become full-fledged members of our American community. And we must change it.

Last summer, I called on Congress to free our fellow Americans from this unfair choice between going to work and keeping health insurance. Today, Congress is considering landmark bipartisan legislation to do just that. The Work Incentives Improvement Act, sponsored by Senators Jeffords and Kennedy, has awaited passage in the Senate and the House for months. With more than 75 Senate co-sponsors from both parties, there is no good reason why it should take this long to pass. I have proposed funds in my balanced budget to support this legislation. So I challenge Congress to pass the Jeffords-Kennedy bill right away. Next month, we will mark the ninth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The best way we can celebrate the landmark legislation that literally widened the doors of opportunity for millions is to throw open those doors even wider so that more Americans with disabilities can join the proud ranks of working citizens.

There is much more we can do. In my balanced budget, I am also proposing a \$1,000 tax credit to help people with disabilities afford the specialized transportation, technology, or

personal assistance they need to make a successful transition to work. And we must double our efforts to make “assistive technologies” such as voice recognition software, mobile telephones, Braille translators, more widely available to disabled Americans. I challenge Congress to move forward with these proposals.

And today, I am taking immediate action to give more Americans with disabilities the opportunity to become a part of the largest workforce in America. As some of you may know, on Monday, the First Lady, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore and I will be hosting a White House Conference on Mental Health. One of our goals is to help more Americans understand that mental illness is not a character flaw, but a disability. That is why today, I am using my executive authority as President to strip away the outdated barriers that keep people with psychiatric disabilities from serving our nation in the federal government. I am directing all federal agencies to provide applicants with mental illnesses the same opportunities as other applicants with disabilities.

Government must do its part to widen the circle of opportunity to even more Americans with disabilities. But Americans as individuals can also take action. The three citizens we honor today are proof of the difference a single individual can make. I am proud to present these awards to each of them.

First, to Joyce Bender. Fifteen years ago, as Joyce Bender lay in a hospital trauma unit, recovering from a near-fatal cerebral hemorrhage, she made a vow to give something back to the patients who were not so lucky. Through Bender Consulting Services, she has used her own expertise as a professional head-hunter to place people with disabilities in high-wage, high-tech jobs. Joyce knows that the demand for high-skilled workers will only continue to grow – and she is determined to make sure more people with disabilities will be ready to meet it. To keep her employee roster full, she founded a new program to train even more disabled people in high-tech skills at a local community college. So it is an honor to present this award to Joyce Bender.

Next, to James H. Click, Jr. As the head of nine car dealerships in California and Arizona, Jim Click is an undisputed leader in his field. But he is also unrivaled in his commitment to hiring and extending opportunity to people with disabilities. A few years ago, Jim recognized that he could encourage more businesses to follow his lead by making it easier for them to find workers with the right skills. So he founded Linkages, an organization that brings Tucson businesses and rehabilitation programs together to match qualified people with disabilities to appropriate jobs in the private sector. In a little over a year, more than 170 people have found work through Linkages. It is an honor present this award to Jim Click.

Finally, to Laura Hershey. Laura once said that “disability is not a tragedy... It is powerful.” By speaking her mind, and using her gifts as a writer to point out the shortcomings and possibilities of our society, Laura has found the power to change the world. As the head of a variety of disability organizations and as a private citizen, she has fought to reform our Social Security, housing, transportation systems and other areas to better serve Americans living with

disabilities. Economic freedom and self-sufficiency for Americans with disabilities is her goal. I am confident she will not rest until she achieves it. I am proud to present this final award to Laura Hershey.

A high-tech head hunter from Pittsburgh, a car dealer from Tucson, a writer and activist from Denver – our awardees seem to have little in common. But they are bound by their remarkable passion for empowering the disabled. Most of all, each one of them is a true patriot. Harry Truman once said that “we love our country ... because it offers us the chance to lead useful lives and to do what we can for those around us.” I thank each of you for working to give our fellow Americans with disabilities the chance to work and lead useful lives; and in so doing strengthening the ties that bind us all together in love and loyalty to our country.

Message Sent To:

Christopher C. Jennings/OPD/EOP
Cynthia A. Rice/OPD/EOP
Devorah R. Adler/OPD/EOP
Jonathan M. Young/WHO/EOP
Karin Kullman/OPD/EOP

Q. Is there a reason why persons with psychiatric disabilities were appointed differently than those with mental retardation or physical disabilities?

A. **When the appointing authority for psychiatric disabilities was created 20 years ago, attitudes about mental illness were different.**

This led to different standards being applied to those with psychiatric disabilities than for persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities.

This Executive order, and the implementing regulations, will resolve these differences.

Q. Was an Ee

EXECUTIVE ORDER

AMENDING THE CIVIL SERVICE RULES RELATING TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 3301 and 3302 of Title 5, United States Code, and in order to give individuals with psychiatric disabilities the same opportunities as persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation under the Civil Service Rules, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It is the policy of this Administration and a goal of the United States to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities. The Federal Government as an employer should serve as a model for the employment of persons with disabilities and utilize the full potential of these talented citizens. The Civil Service Rules provide that persons with mental retardation, severe physical disabilities or psychiatric disabilities may be hired under excepted appointing authorities. The Civil Service Rules governing appointment of persons with psychiatric disabilities were adopted over 20 years ago when attitudes about mental illness were different, which led to stricter standards for hiring persons with psychiatric disabilities than for persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities. Persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities could be appointed for more than two years and could convert to competitive status after completion of two years of satisfactory service in their excepted position, while people with psychiatric disabilities could not. The Office of Personnel Management and the President's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities believe that the Federal government could better benefit from the contributions of persons with psychiatric disabilities if they were given the same opportunities available to people with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities.

Section 2. Implementation.

(a) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall ensure that persons with psychiatric disabilities have the same hiring opportunities as are given to persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities.

(b) Civil Service Rule III (5 CFR Part 3) is amended by adding the following new paragraph to subsection (b) of section 3.1:

"(3) An employee with psychiatric disabilities who completes at least two years of satisfactory service in a position excepted from the competitive service."

Section 3. The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to implement this order.

Section 4. This order is effective upon publication in the Federal Register.

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXECUTIVE ORDER FOR THOSE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

Questions and Answers

Q. What is the purpose of today's announcement?

- The Federal Government, as an employer, has an obligation to serve as a model for the successful employment of persons with disabilities.**

The Civil Service Rules governing the appointment of persons with psychiatric disabilities were adopted over twenty years ago, at a time when attitudes about mental illness were different, and as a result, people with mental illness were treated differently under these Rules than people with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities. They faced stricter standards.

That is why President Clinton issued an Executive order today calling upon the US Office of Personnel Management to ensure that individuals with psychiatric disabilities are given the same hiring opportunities as persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation. The Civil Service Rules will be changed so that people with

psychiatric disabilities are covered by the same kind of appointing authority used for individuals with other disabilities.

Q. What's significant about the Executive order?

A. It will help people with psychiatric disabilities gain meaningful employment and reach their full potential as productive members of our society.

Our nation must have a workforce with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in the 21st century, so we cannot afford to let any sector of our society be excluded from contributing to our future success.

Q. Aren't you favoring people with psychiatric disabilities over other individuals?

A. No. The Executive order simply levels the playing field for people with psychiatric disabilities – people who may have spent their whole lives dealing with the stigma of mental illness. By modernizing the 20 year old Civil Service Rules to give these people the same employment opportunities as those with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities, we are helping them to achieve their full potential as productive members of our society.

Q. Why hasn't the Administration done this sooner?

A. Empowering people with disabilities has always been a priority for this Administration. President Clinton formed a Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities to look at this complex issue and make recommendations for achieving a more inclusive workforce.

With the release of the Task Force's findings, the President moved quickly to implement changes that facilitated greater hiring opportunities for the disabled. This Executive order is only the most recent example.

Q. How many persons with disabilities are currently employed by withthe Federal Government?

A. As of September 30, 1998, there were 124,139 employees * with disabilities in the non-postal Federal executive branch, or 7.1 percent of the workforce.

[* this is the number of people who voluntarily identified themselves as disabled.]

Q. Are drug and alcohol dependent people covered, and if so, why?

A. Individuals suffering from alcoholism so that it affects their ability to perform a job will be considered to have a disability if:

- They provided sufficient medical documentation to meet the statutory definition of an individual with a disability;**
- The disability substantially limits one or more major life activities; and**
- The agency determines that the individual can perform the essential functions of the job with, or without, reasonable accommodation.**

Federal employees who are currently engaging in the illegal use of drugs do not, by law, meet the definition of disability, and therefore are not eligible for this appointment.