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

Today, at the award ceremony for the President's Award for the Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, President Clinton signed an executive order eliminating the federal government's stricter hiring standards for psychiatric disabilities, an issue highlighted by Mrs. Gore earlier this year. Since the beginning of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the American economy has added 17.7 million new jobs, and unemployment is at a 29 year low of 4.3 percent. However, 95 percent of individuals with psychiatric disabilities are unemployed. This new action will level the playing field for individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are seeking employment and eliminate the institutional barriers that prevent them from bringing their enormous energy and talent to the workforce. He also highlighted the Clinton-Gore Administration's longstanding commitment to all individuals with disabilities and called on Congress to pass the historic, bipartisan Work Incentives Improvement Act. Today, the President:

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.

Urged Congress to Pass the Historic, Bipartisan Work Incentives Improvement Act. This historic new initiative removes significant barriers to work for people with disabilities and improves access to health care by providing greater incentives and options for states to enable people to return to work to maintain eligibility for Medicaid; extending Medicare coverage, for the first time, 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. 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 work. Today, the President urged Congress to move swiftly to pass this important and long overdue legislation, which has overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

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.

THE WHITE HOUSE AT WORK

Wednesday, January 13, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AMERICANS

Increased access to health care; more assistance at home and in the workplace; remarkable new technologies: that is how we will make sure that all Americans, no matter what their abilities, can take their place in the workplace.

President Bill Clinton
January 13, 1999

Today, President Clinton will unveil a historic new initiative that will remove significant barriers to work for people with disabilities. This three-part budget initiative, which invests \$2 billion over five years, will help provide better health care options for people with disabilities who work, a \$1,000 tax credit for work-related expenses, and invest in technology that can enhance their ability to participate in the workplace

Removing The Barriers That Stop People With Disabilities From Going To Work. Since the President and Vice President took office, the American economy has added 17.7 million new jobs, and unemployment is at a 29-year low; however, the unemployment rate among working-age adults with disabilities is nearly 75 percent. *People with disabilities often become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they work*, putting them in the difficult position of choosing between health care coverage and work. In addition, advances in technology and communications are often not accessible to people with disabilities

A Historic Plan To Improve Economic Opportunity For Americans With Disabilities. The President's budget proposal will include a three-part initiative to bring greater opportunity to Americans with disabilities:

- *Funding the Work Incentives Improvement Act.* Health care, particularly prescription drugs and personal assistance, is essential for people with disabilities who work. The President's budget fully funds the Work Incentive Improvement Act, that would:

Improve access to health care by:

-- **Expanding states' ability to provide a Medicaid buy-in to people with disabilities who return to work;!!Extend Medicare coverage, for the first time, for people with disabilities who return to work;!!Create a new Medicaid buy-in demonstration to help people with a specific physical or mental impairment that is not severe enough to qualify for health assistance, but is likely to lead to a severe disability in the absence of medical treatment;**

Modernize the employment services system by creating a "ticket" that will enable SSI or SSDI beneficiaries to use a range of public or private providers for vocational rehabilitation. If the person goes back to work and

achieves substantial earnings, providers would be paid a portion of the benefits saved;

Create a Work Incentive Grant program to provide benefits planning and assistance, facilitate access to information about work incentives, and better integrate services to people with disabilities working or returning to work.

- *Providing a \$1,000 Tax Credit For Work-Related Expenses For People With Disabilities.* Under the President's proposal, workers with significant disabilities would receive an annual \$1,000 tax credit to help cover the costs associated with employment, including, special transportation and technology;
- *Improving Access to Assistive Technology.* This new initiative will accelerate the development and adoption of information and communications technologies that can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and enhance their ability to participate in the workplace.

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THE WHITE HOUSE AT WORK

Friday, February 12, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AMERICANS

Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking important steps to prevent people with disabilities from choosing between critical protections and work.

Vice President Al Gore
February 12, 1999

Today, Vice President Al Gore unveils a new regulation that will improve economic opportunities for at least 250,000 Americans with disabilities. The Vice President will also reaffirm the Administration's proposed comprehensive initiative to improve economic opportunity for all Americans with disabilities.

Expanding Economic Opportunities For More Than 250,000 Americans With Disabilities. Many people receiving Federal disability benefits want to return to work, but hesitate because they fear loss of critical benefits. Under current rules, a person cannot receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), if they earn more than \$500 a month. *Today, the Vice President announces a new regulation increasing the amount of income Americans with disabilities receiving SSDI or SSI can earn -- from \$500 to \$700 per month -- a 40 percent increase, and still receive critical cash and medical benefits.*

A Comprehensive Initiative To Expand Economic Opportunities For Americans With Disabilities. The Clinton-Gore Administration's fiscal year 2000 budget includes the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which was recently introduced by Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, Moynihan, and Roth. This proposal would:

- *Improve Access To Health Care by expanding States' ability to provide a Medicaid buy-in (1) for people with disabilities who return to work whose assets and/or income exceed current limits; (2) for people who do not meet the current disability standard, but who can work only because of medical treatment or (3), in limited circumstances, people with a specific physical or mental impairment that is not yet severe enough to qualify for health care assistance, but that is reasonably expected to lead to a severe disability in the absence of medical treatment. It also extends Medicare coverage for people with disabilities who return to work;*
- *Modernize The Employment Services System by creating a "ticket" that will enable SSI or SSDI beneficiaries to go to any of a number of public or private providers for vocational rehabilitation. If the beneficiary goes to work and achieves substantial earnings, providers would be paid a portion of the benefits saved;*
- *Create A Work Incentive Grant Program to provide benefits planning and assistance, facilitate access to information about work incentives, and better integrate services to people with disabilities working or returning to work.*

Providing A Tax Credit To Help People With Disabilities Get To Work.

Under this new proposal, workers with significant disabilities would receive an annual \$1,000 tax credit to help cover the formal and informal costs that are associated with employment, such as special transportation and technology. This tax credit, which will assist 200,000 to 300,000 Americans, will help ensure that people with disabilities have the tools they need to return to work.

Improving Access To Assistive Technology. The Administration's initiative would double funding for the development and adoption of information and communications technologies that can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and enhance their ability to participate in the workplace. The initiative would:

- Help make the Federal government a "model user" of assistive technology;
- Support new and expanded state loan programs to make assistive technology more affordable for Americans with disabilities;
- Invest in research and development and technology transfer for people with disabilities.

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FINAL

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

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

WHEREAS it is the goal of the United States to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS 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; and

WHEREAS the Civil Service Rules provide that persons with mental retardation, severe physical disabilities or psychiatric disabilities may be hired under excepted appointing authorities; and

WHEREAS the authorities 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; and

WHEREAS persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities may be appointed for more than two years and may be converted to competitive status after completion of two years of satisfactory service in their excepted positions, while persons with psychiatric disabilities may not; and

WHEREAS 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 opportunities currently available to persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities;

NOW, THEREFORE, 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, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. 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.

Section 2. 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

Version 7, 5/28/99a.m.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

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

WHEREAS it is the goal of the United States to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS 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; and

WHEREAS the Civil Service Rules provide that persons with mental retardation, severe physical disabilities or psychiatric disabilities may be hired under excepted appointing authorities; and

WHEREAS the authorities 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; and

WHEREAS persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities may be appointed for more than two years and may be converted to competitive status after completion of two years of satisfactory service in their excepted positions, while persons with psychiatric disabilities may not; and

WHEREAS 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 opportunities currently available to persons with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities;

NOW, THEREFORE, 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 permit individuals with psychiatric disabilities to obtain civil service competitive status,~~ it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. 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.

Section ~~4~~2. 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 ~~2~~3. The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to implement this order.

Section ~~3~~4. This order is effective upon publication in the Federal Register.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Version 7, 5/28/99a.m.