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Americans With Disabilities Act

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WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF PRESIDENTIAL PERSONNEL

MEMORANDUM



WHL

TO: Bruce Lindsey
Carol Rasco
Alexis Herman

CC: Marcia Hale
Christine Varney

FROM: Paul Steven Miller (extension 7026)

DATE: July 16, 1993

SUBJECT: The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Disability Community

● INTRODUCTION

- As the result of a consultation with Jan Piercy, Jan felt that you should be aware of these issues affecting the disability community. I tried to meet with Mike Lux from Public Liaison who had been working on these issues, to apprise him, but he was not available today.
- I fear that there is about to be a major crisis with the disability community if a Presidential event it is not arranged around the Americans with Disability Act on July 26, 1993. I am willing and able to take on responsibility for these issues to assist with any staff shortages. I will follow up with Carol Rasco on these issues.

● ISSUES

- July 26th is the anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the civil rights act for persons with disabilities.
- July 26th also marks the start of the ADA requirement for a national TTD system enabling hearing persons to communicate with Deaf persons.
- **NO EVENT** has been scheduled with the President and the Disability Community to mark the occasion.
- President is traveling to Chicago to attend a reinventing the workplace conference with Secretaries Reich and Brown, thus the President's schedule is

tight. (Plans are underway to insert some comments about disability issues into his remarks at the conference, but such remarks will be lost on the disability community.)

- There is a desire to keep the President's "message of the day" focused on the President's economic plan.
- OPPORTUNITY:
 - Have an event that allows the President to acknowledge and celebrate the anniversary of the ADA and frame the mission of the White House Office of Consumer Affairs in a way in which it has been conceived without interfering with his travel schedule and "economic message of the day".
- SOLUTION:
 - President should appear on a morning news show, (*i.e.*, Good Morning America or the Today Show) in which he:
 - Places a TTD call to Deaf person (*i.e.* Senator Tom Harkin's brother in Iowa) demonstrating the new TTD system. The call can be placed from the Oval Office while he is surrounded by members of the disability community and Senators Harkin and McCain. Hamp and Carol Rasco are also involved.
 - President announces the White House Office of Consumer Affairs appointments, including the role of that office will play in coordinating disability policy throughout the government. The President identifies a disabled individual as Special Assistant to the President in the White House who will be focusing on disability issues. (Currently there is no disabled person in the White House focusing on disability policy issues.)
 - President signs Executive Order redirecting funds within the Department of Justice for ADA enforcement. (*Carol Rasco is presently reviewing a proposal drafted by Harkin's office.*) *Alternative* -- Janet Reno announces the redirection of Department of Justice funds at a Department of Justice event.
- Goals Achieved

- Directly acknowledges and celebrates the disability community and the ADA without conflicting with the President's schedule or message. Acknowledges the national Deaf relay system.
- Frames and establishes the concept of the White House Office of Consumer Affairs and establishes a person in the White House who is responsible for disability policy.^{1/}
- Averts snubbing and alienating the disability community and Senator Tom Harkin by recognizing disability issues.
- Responds to the fact that George Bush will be hosting a July meeting with disability community leaders in Maine to discuss ADA issues.

^{1/} Presently, there is no disabled person in White House focusing on disability issues for the President. Bush had Special Assistant to the Vice-President for Disability Issues. I have received calls from the Vice-President's Office asking me what to do with all of the phone calls that come in for that office. The Public Liaison staffer in charge of the disability community recently informed me that he will no longer have the disability community as part of his portfolio.