

FOIA MARKER

**This is not a textual record. This is used as an
administrative marker by the William J. Clinton
Presidential Library Staff.**

Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records

Subgroup/Office of Origin: Counsel Office

Series/Staff Member: Jonathan Young

Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 40194

FolderID:

Folder Title:

ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] 10th [Anniversary]

Stack:

S

Row:

112

Section:

1

Shelf:

5

Position:

3

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. letter	Louise McKown to Vice President Albert Gore; RE: Personal [partial] (1 page)	07/22/1999	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Counsel Office
Jonathan Young
OA/Box Number: 40194

FOLDER TITLE:

ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] 10th [Anniversary]

2007-0143-F
db4486

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

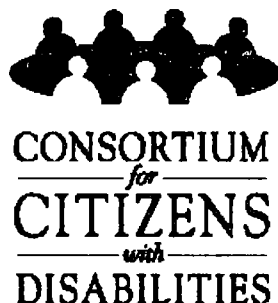
PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

C
SCHED



June 28, 1999

President William J. Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

7/26/00
BC SC
7/1/99

Dear Mr. President:

July 26, 2000, will mark the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a coalition of nearly 100 national organizations representing the interests of people with disabilities, asks you to recognize this important occasion with a celebration at the White House.

We would like to assist in organizing this event and work with your staff to make it a fitting commemoration of this major civil rights law. We anticipate many people will participate in events around the country that day, and hope that many more will come to Washington to observe the progress we have made and recommit to full integration of people with disabilities into American society.

On July 26, 1990, thousands of people with disabilities, their friends and families watched and cheered as President George Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on the White House lawn. A celebration of our Independence Day followed with a picnic on the Ellipse.

Ann Cody of VSA will contact Jonathon Young in early July to inquire into the specifics of planning this event.

Yours truly,

Paul Marchand
Chair

CC: Jonathon Young
White House Communications Office



G.R.E.A.T
POSSIBILITIES

LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS NETWORK

3042 Old Forge Road • Post Office Box 14115
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70898-4115

Secretary Donna Shalala
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

July 5, 2000

Dear Secretary Shalala,

I am writing to invite you to be the featured speaker at the statewide event we are hosting on Saturday, July 29, 2000, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 25th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

We are a nonprofit agency and the designated Tech Act project in Louisiana. Our purposes are to assist people with disabilities and with functional limitations due to aging find out about and get the most appropriate assistive technology that will allow them maximum independence and optimum quality of life and to advocate for universal accessibility to assistive technology. To provide you with more information about LATAN, I'm enclosing our brochure, our current annual report, and our most recent quarterly newsletter.

We are planning an all-day, statewide birthday party and family picnic from 9:00a.m. to 6:00p.m. at the Levee Park in Alexandria ("the crossroads of Louisiana"). Entertainment will consist of an all-day bluegrass music festival and accessible hot-air balloon rides for children and adults. There is an area for wheelchairs right in front of the stage, and the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf is providing sign language interpreting. We are estimating that attendance will be more than 1,000.

The event has been endorsed by all of the major disability-related organizations in the state, including the Governor's Office on Disability Affairs, Families Helping Families, Louisiana Coalition for Citizens and Disabilities, Statewide Independent Living Council, Resources for Independent Living, the Advocacy Center, Louisiana Association of the Deaf, Louisiana Citizens for Action Now, the Mental Health Association of Louisiana, Louisiana Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Louisiana Rehabilitation Council.

We believe this will be a showcase event for the ADA and, therefore, an ideal event for you, on behalf of the President, to help raise awareness about the contributions and viability of the ADA, about the availability and benefits of assistive technology, and about the importance of universal access to assistive technology. We hope you will be able to attend, and we look forward to your reply.

225-925-9500 • 1-800-270-6185 (V/TT) • 225-925-9560 (FAX) • <http://www.latan.org>

*LATAN receives funds from the U.S. Department of Education through the Assistive Technology Act of 1998
NIDRR Grant # H224A10028*



G.R.E.A.T
POSSIBILITIES

LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS NETWORK

3042 Old Forge Road • Post Office Box 14115
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70898-4115

We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Cordially,

Shay Clark

pc: Johnathan Young, Whitehouse Associate Director of Public Liaison and Disabilities Outreach

225-925-9500 • 1-800-270-6185 (V/TT) • 225-925-9560 (FAX) • <http://www.latan.org>

LATAN receives funds from the U.S. Department of Education through the Assistive Technology Act of 1998
NIDRR Grant # H224A10028

7/20/00

***A Minor Consideration
Kid Actors,
Past & Present***
www.minorcon.org

***Paul Petersen,
President & Founder
(a non-profit foundation)***

MR. JOHNATHON YOUNG
VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 456-0362

PAGE ONE OF TWO

RE: THE ADA WHITE HOUSE EVENT, 7/26/00

Dear Mr. Young,

My Washington DC Representative, Ms. Barbara Rew and her husband, Mark, have just informed me that there will be a reception at the White House on Wednesday the 26th of July celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Barbara and her husband will be attending the Tuesday night affair with the Vice-President.

I serve on the Governor Committee for Media Access here in California, and am a member of the Screen Actors Guild *Performers With Disabilities Committee*. This Foundation is, of course, concerned about all children, and the issues surrounding positive images of the disabled in the media are a vital part of our advocacy.

As it happens I will be in the Capitol on the 26th presenting an ambitious legislative program at the Department of Labor at Ten in the morning. This is a follow-up to my speech next Tuesday at the NAGLO Conference (National Association of Government Labor Officials) in Atlanta. I do not arrive in DC until Tuesday evening.

I had to send regrets on our EDD Sacramento gathering because of my Washington trip, and now Barbara tells me there is a White House reception. Is it possible to wrangle an invitation, even at this late hour? My delegation numbers no more than four.

A Minor Consideration
14530 Denker Avenue
Gardena, CA 90247

Tel: (310) 532-1345
Fax: (310) 523-3691
Cell: (310) 344-9686

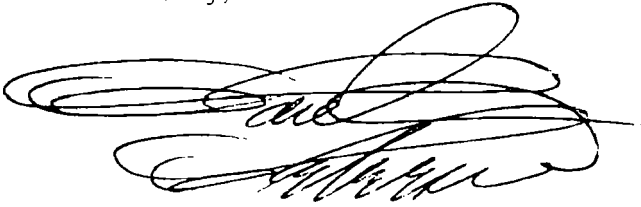
ppetersen@msn.com

7/20/00

My presentation at the DoL is from 10 AM until Noon. If the reception falls outside that time frame I would be most appreciative of the opportunity to attend this important celebration. My other appointments on The Hill can be rescheduled.

Thank you for your consideration. I am traveling to New York this afternoon, but I will be on-line, and my cell phone is always with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Petersen', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Paul Petersen, CSE-WSO
President & Founder
A Minor Consideration

A Minor Consideration
14530 Denker Avenue
Gardena, CA 90247

Tel: (310) 532-1345
Fax: (310) 523-3691
Cell: (310) 344-9686

ppetersen@msn.com

C O V E R

LATAN FAX

S H E E T

To: Jonathan M. Young
Fax #: 202-456-0362
From: Sandi Parker-Allen 
Fax #: 225-925-9560
Subject: 7/29 ADA Birthday Party - Alexandria, LA
Date: 6/28/2000

Pages, including this cover sheet: 8

COMMENTS:

Jonathan,

Sorry I wasn't able to get this to you yesterday. Apparently, a slow, underground water leak shorted out power to our building (fried a computer next door!), so nothing was working ... including the A/C!

Shay Clark, the person coordinating this event will draft the letter to Sec. Shalala and copy you (it would help if you'd e-mail me your snail address).

Also, on a different note, would you please e-mail me a copy of the corrected Tech Act info we discussed? I know that several other projects are 'concerned' and I'd like to try to allay those concerns.

Don't forget, I'm still going to need a major 'draw' for the December conference (3-6, in Baton Rouge) and will definitely need you to 'walk me through' the process.

Thanks muchly!

From the desk of...

Saundra Parker-Allen
Policy Director
Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network
P.O. Box 14115
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4115

225-925-9500 (V/T)
800-270-6185 (V/T)
Fax: 225-925-9560
E-mail: sparker-allen@latan.org

**LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS NETWORK**

3042 OLD FORGE DR • PO BOX 14115

BATON ROUGE, LA 70898-4115

225-925-9500 • 1-800-270-6185

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT:**

Shay Clark

Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN)

1-800-270-6185 or 225-925-9500 (Baton Rouge)

Fax: 225-925-9560

E-Mail: sclark@latan.orgWeb: www.latan.org**Headline: Statewide Birthday Party for the Americans with Disabilities Act**

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, June 27, 2000

A statewide birthday party and family picnic will be held to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The event will be held in Alexandria, at the Levee Park Amphitheater on Saturday, July 29, from 9:00a.m. to 6:00p.m. It is free, and everyone is invited to join the fun.

There will be a nine-hour bluegrass music festival, featuring bluegrass musicians from Louisiana and Texas. Hot-air balloon rides for non-disabled and disabled children and adults will also be available. Families will need to bring their picnic food, nonalcoholic drinks, and picnic blanket.

The event is for everyone in the state; but, for individuals with disabilities, there will be a wheelchair area in front of the stage, and sign language interpreting will be provided by the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf.

Laura Brackin, Executive Director of the Governor's Office on Disability Affairs, will be a featured speaker.

The birthday party is hosted by the Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network and sponsored by Semolina of Alexandria. More than a dozen organizations across the state have endorsed this event, including the Governor's Office on Disability Affairs, Families Helping Families, the Louisiana Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, the Statewide Independent Living Council, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Resources for Independent Living, The Advocacy Center, ARC of Louisiana, the Louisiana Association of the Deaf, Louisiana Citizens for Action Now, the Mental Health Association of Louisiana, the Louisiana Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Louisiana Rehabilitation Council.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law by President George Bush on July 16, 1990. It is a federal civil rights law enacted to eliminate discrimination against people

with disabilities by ensuring equal opportunities in employment, places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, public and private transportation, telecommunications, and state and local government services and programs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was passed in 1975, to protect the right of children with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education. It focuses on accommodations that permit access to the mainstream curriculum. Because of the changes produced by this law, more than 46% of students with special needs now attend regular classes and 40% more such students now graduate from high school. Students with disabilities now have the opportunity to get the same high school diploma as non-disabled students, and increasing numbers of them are continuing into higher education and joining the workforce.

Details of the birthday party, including directions, are available by calling LATAN at 1-800-270-6185 (toll-free) or 225-925-9500 (Baton Rouge, voice and TTY).

CONTACT:

Shay Clark

Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN)

1-800-270-6185 or 225-925-9500 (Baton Rouge)

Fax: 225-925-9560

E-Mail: sclark@latan.org

Web: www.latan.org

LATAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting access to assistive technology for everyone, especially individuals with disabilities and functional limitations due to aging.

###

**LOUISIANA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS NETWORK**

3042 OLD FORGE DR • PO BOX 14115
BATON ROUGE, LA 70898-4115
225-925-9500 • 1-800-270-6185

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT:****Shay Clark****Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN)****1-800-270-6185 or 225-925-9500 (Baton Rouge)****Fax: 225-925-9560****E-Mail: sclark@latan.org****Web: www.latan.org****Headline: The Americans with Disabilities Act Is 10 Years Old****Baton Rouge, Louisiana, June 27, 2000**

Hailed as the "Civil Rights Act" for people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act (the ADA) is 10 years old this year. It was signed into law by President George Bush on July 26, 1990. The ADA is a federal civil rights law that supplements and complements other federal and state laws that extend to people with disabilities and to people with functional limitations due to aging rights and responsibilities that are no more and no less than those that already exist for other citizens. It was enacted to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities by ensuring equal opportunities in employment, places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, public and private transportation, telecommunications, and state and local government services and programs.

Approximately 48 million Americans and 26% of Louisianians have physical or mental

-more-

ADA Is 10 Years Old (page 2)

impairments, including chronic health conditions and emotional illnesses, that substantially limit daily activities, such as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, working, and caring for oneself. They are all protected by the ADA, which prohibits discriminatory treatment and denial of the right to participate.

The ADA is based on common sense, equality, and fairness and does not require any measure that would cause an undue financial or administrative burden. Rather, it is designed to be a win-win proposition for individuals, government, and businesses. Individuals with disabilities are not only consumers of special services; they are also consumers of general products and services available for purchase if buyers can obtain access to them. However, in the ADA, Congress provided judicial relief for people with disabilities who have been discriminated against in the areas of employment, access to state and local government facilities and services, and public accommodations, as well as policies, practices, and procedures.

The First Decade

Much of the legal activity and attention in the ADA's first decade has focused on employment discrimination. In a much publicized series of decisions a year ago, in June, 1999, the Supreme Court narrowed a key definition in the ADA of what constitutes a "qualified individual with disability." The high court held that potential ADA plaintiffs must be evaluated in their mitigated, or corrected, state to determine whether they are "substantially limited in a major life activity" and, therefore, disabled.

To many people in the disability community, the equal access provisions of the ADA are the real heart of the law. In 1999, the Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision that will

-more-

ADA Is 10 Years Old (page 3)

have far-reaching effects on the care of individuals with disabilities. In *L.S. v. OLMSTEAD*, S. CT 2176, the court found that states may not unnecessarily segregate and institutionalize individuals with disabilities and must seek to provide services in the most integrated setting possible in the community. According to Judith Heumann, herself disabled and currently U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, who oversees federal special education, rehabilitation, and disability research programs, "Disability becomes a tragedy for us only when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives, like job opportunities and barrier-free buildings.

Universal Design for "User-Friendly" Mainstream Accessibility

Justin Dart, the chief proponent in support of the initial ADA legislation, has said that "the measure of civilization in a culture is the diversity of its members who are allowed to participate." Over the past 30 years, dramatic advances in medical treatment and assistive technology have occurred that now allow more people than ever before who have physical and mental disabilities to participate in the mainstream of society. People with disabilities are no longer seen as sick, incapable, and dependent. Instead, their quality of life is measured by their degree of independence with accommodations, such as augmentative communication devices and entrance ramps. Auxiliary devices and services and improved accessibility to constructed facilities permit people with disabilities to participate in and contribute to our commerce and our culture in increasingly significant ways. And this, according to Dart, "is the first and only legitimate responsibility of human culture.

The ADA has essentially created a new, universal standard of design for buildings and products that are usable by all people and allow maximum mainstreaming by people with

-more-

ADA Is 10 Years Old (page 4)

functional limitations. This approach has been termed "Universal Design." For example, architectural guidelines call for all doorways to be a minimum of 32 inches wide, so that wheelchair users can enter all buildings and gain access to all inside rooms. The aim is to find solutions that are usable by everyone or else to provide alternatives that offer a choice when a solution that accommodates everyone is not available.

According to Ed Roberts, the father of the independent living movement, the disability rights movement has made some of "the most profound social changes ever seen." The ADA provides individuals with disabilities and with functional limitations due to aging the right to participate in and enjoy the good, services, privileges, benefits, and accommodations offered to the general public. To break down barriers to participation in all aspects of our society is to allow more and better access to education, rehabilitation, and employment of individuals with disabilities. This will lead to fuller and more productive lives for all Americans. Thus, the ADA enables society as a whole to benefit from the skills and talents of individuals with disabilities and allows everyone to gain from their increased productivity and their increased purchasing power and ability to use it.

CONTACT:

Shay Clark

Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN)

1-800-270-6185 or 225-925-9500 (Baton Rouge)

Fax: 225-925-9560

E-Mail: sclark@latan.org

Web: www.latan.org

LATAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting access to assistive technology for everyone, especially individuals with disabilities and functional limitations due to aging.

###



JUL 23 1999

EAST TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS CENTER, INC.

4918 N. Broadway • Knoxville, TN 37918
(423) 219-0130 • FAX (423) 219-0137 • etstactn@aol.com •
<http://www.kornet.org/ettac>

① response
② bill
B. J. J.

Fax Cover Sheet

To: Vice President Albert Gore

Date Sent: July 23, 1999

Fax : 202-456-7044

Phone #: 202-456-2326

From: Louise McKown, Public Awareness & Systems Change Analysis
Chairwoman for the board of the Tennessee Disability Coalition

Number of pages: Five plus the cover sheet

Special instructions:

Please read before the ninth anniversary celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26 in Nashville. We are so pleased you have chosen this state this year to address the disability community.

In this letter I have eluded to a tentative meeting with Doug Horne to discuss how we can get out the disability vote. I spoke with him at a Tennessee Democratic Party retreat this spring about brainstorming with me about this. We never set a firm date. I do not expect this any time soon and in no way fault him for not contacting me. He has been so busy with fund raisers for the congressional delegation and you, plus working to build a new Tennessee Democratic Party headquarters in Nashville (and those plans are fabulous) that I know this is on the back burner for him. He is really a very busy man and the best party president we could have at this time.

We very much look forward to having you at our ADA celebration.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE

The information contained in this fax message is being transmitted to and is intended only for the use of the individual named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby advised that any dissemination or copy of this facsimile is strictly prohibited. If you have received this facsimile in error, please immediately notify us by telephone at (423) 219-0130 and destroy this facsimile message.

July 22, 1999

102 Emory Lane
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
(423) 483-1822

Vice President Albert Gore
Old Executive Office Building
17th & Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Vice President Gore:

Every year since I became involved with the disability movement, I try to celebrate the anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act in some way. Sometimes more successfully than others. I doubt I will ever be able to top how I am spending it this year though.

I was thrilled to be asked by my executive director to attend a luncheon at the Cryland Hotel which you will be attending. I work for a non-profit assistive technology center in Knoxville doing public awareness and systems change analysis. I sometimes joke that my boss actually pays me to raise Cain or cane. This always gets a rise out of people because I carry two canes. I have a rare progressive neurological disorder which affects my voice, manual dexterity, gait, and balance.

Then I called Carol Westlake, the executive director for the Tennessee Disability Coalition, to tell her. The Coalition is comprised of 60 organizations and agencies from around the state to act as one voice on policy issues for people with disabilities on the local, state, and federal levels. I serve as chair of their board.

I had just spent three days with her for meetings on a variety of issues, but somehow the subject of your coming did not come up. Not that you aren't important, but I guess the issues we were dealing with like getting the state to provide long term care services so folks aren't forced into nursing homes, TennCare, the Telecommunications Act, and tax reform took up all our time.

As it turned out Carol worked with Becky Ogle to set up this reception for you. I was so glad she found time out of her hectic schedule to work on this. Of all the states you could have picked to celebrate this day, we are especially honored that you picked this one.

I knew you would be in Tennessee that day because the Anderson County Democratic Women's Club, for whom I am their corresponding secretary, is trying to sell tickets for the reception in Knoxville you will be attending that evening.

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. letter	Louise McKown to Vice President Albert Gore; RE: Personal [partial] (1 page)	07/22/1999	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Counsel Office
Jonathan Young
OA/Box Number: 40194

FOLDER TITLE:

ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] 10th [Anniversary]

2007-0143-F
db4486

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or
financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President
and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of
personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed
of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C.
2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of
an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial
information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of
personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement
purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of
financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information
concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

I was almost going to buy one, but there is no way I can get back to Knoxville by 6:30, unless I fly with you on Air Force Two and make my boss drive home without me. Thankfully, Bobbie Caldwell told our club tonight that she will be having a fund raiser for you at her house in August. That hopefully I can make, though it may not be the same as having you there even with the excellent speaker she has lined up.

There are so many issues that touch the lives of people with disabilities that I would love to discuss with you. Thankfully, we have people in Washington like Becky to work with you on those. At a Tennessee Democratic Party retreat this spring, I spoke with Doug Horne about coming to my office for a brainstorming session on ways to bring out the disability vote. We have yet to do this. I am also working to educate the candidates running for Rep. Zach Wamp's seat on these issues. I feel that most people with disabilities will vote Democratic, but they must feel that politicians care about and are knowledgeable about their issues.

I am truly hopeful that the bill requiring election commissions to make the polls accessible will pass. As you may know a recent study concluded that people with disabilities don't make the effort to vote because of conditions they experience at the polls. At this retreat for the Tennessee Democratic Party, it was somewhat dismissed because we could always vote absentee. Unfortunately, that doesn't happen. People with disabilities

just don't vote. Even though under the ADA, government programs (and I maintain voting is such a program) have to be made accessible, so many counties don't even have an ADA committee dealing with accessibility issues.

Fortunately, we do in Anderson County. I am chair of the County Commissioner's ADA Oversight Committee. We have been using most of our resources to upgrade the county courthouse. We were however, able to get a curb cut at one of the schools put in where people vote, and also get the voting machines moved out of the gym which was only accessible by going down a flight of stairs. Thankfully, that school has just gone through major renovations to make it thoroughly accessible. Fortunately, that seemed to be the only voting place in the county with a problem. But I know this is not the case in other counties. I just hope you can work to make this bill a law before your election in 2000. You can only benefit from it.

I will directly benefit from the passage of the Work Incentive Improvement Act, as I am on SSDI and can only earn up to (b)(6) a month. I would give anything to be able to work full time, but I dare not mess around with losing my Social Security and Medicare because of the progressive nature of my disorder. I don't know how this will play out

[001]

3

in the House with the funding, but somehow I hope you can work to get the joint committees who will have to deal with this issue singing to the same tune.

Oh, if only we could have a Democratic majority in both houses. I walk this tightrope working for a nonprofit and being chair of the board for one, in that I am told I have to be non-partisan. Even though George Bush signed the ADA into law, I have a hard time dealing with conservative Republicans, even compassionate ones. The mark of a truly great society is how they deal with those who are less fortunate, to empower them to have the same opportunities as others. I just don't see the Republican Party being able to do that.

I know this letter is rather lengthy, but I wish to discuss one more subject with you that specifically speaks to empowering people with disabilities. That is one you truly care about, getting the Internet into schools and libraries. You have emphasized more than once about having poorer communities have this access, because it will become the great divide for them in years ahead as they struggle to become more successful. This is also true for people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, our block is partly transportation to get to the libraries, and more so in rural counties. Once we get there, many must rely on others to operate the computer for them because they cannot operate a mouse, or if they are blind, they need special software like JAWS to get online.

Even with IDEA, so many students with disabilities don't get the computers they need in order to learn. But if they do, their families may not be able to pay for the monthly charge for the Internet Service Provider. Especially in the rural counties that don't even have an ISP where it is a long distance phone call to use the Internet, this is a hefty bill.

The Internet is such an important tool for these students who may not be able to turn a page in a book, much less read it if they are blind. It is also proving to be an important part in the lives of adults with disabilities who cannot get out of the house. It keeps them in touch with relatives and friends through email and chat room support groups as well as giving them information that they could never get otherwise. But once again, we have to deal with the cost factor for many of these people.

I know all about this because I am currently working under a Kellogg Foundation grant dealing with this issue. We have been able to sweet talk two local ISPs into giving a group of adults enrolled in a program called CHIPS, Computers for the Homebound and Isolated Persons, discounts on their bills. CHIPS is attempting to put 100 computers in these

4

homes in a 16 county region around Knox County over the next three years.

However, I feel that this will never become a full scale program for all people with disabilities, unless there is some government help. I am thinking in terms of what is available to people with limited incomes with help in paying their phone bills. If one is on SSI, Medicaid, receives food stamps, lives in HUD housing, or receives help in paying utility bills, they can qualify for the Lifeline program that seems to be available in every state. This allows them a discount on their monthly bill of which part is absorbed by the phone company and part is paid for by the state.

Some conservative politicians must have conceded that having telephones these days is important enough to do this. If nothing else, phones are important just in case of an emergency. At some point in the next century, having access to the Internet will also be deemed that important. It is already proving to be that important in the lives of people with disabilities. I am hoping that this issue will be addressed on the federal level in the future. However, it only will be if we have elected officials who understand how important the Internet is to these people.

I know have taken up a great deal of you and your staff's time. It is also midnight, so I will close by saying that I look forward to hearing you at the ADA celebration in Nashville. I am told that Tipper will be with you in Knoxville. I hope she can make this event as well. She has done so much for the mental health community that I hope we can somehow express our gratitude to her that day.

I am also faxing you a letter to the editor I wrote which was submitted to several papers around the state about the importance of the ADA. It already appeared in The Oak Ridger. I am sure you have some ideas for your speech that day, but you at liberty to take what you will from this letter as well.

Have a safe trip down to Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Louise McKown

July 19, 1999

To the Editor,

Disability crosses over all color, religious, age, economic, sexual preference, and political lines. Unfortunately, so often when people speak in terms of minorities, people with disabilities are left out. However, this is the largest minority in this country. One in five Americans has a disability which significantly impairs a major life activity. Odds are that disability will touch all of us or a family member at sometime in our lives.

As the ninth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act approaches on July 26 and as a person who has multiple disabilities, I cannot help but reflect on the gains made and the challenges ahead for people with disabilities. The mere passage of the law was a battle with local governments and businesses screaming "unfunded mandate," and people with disabilities shouting back that the law is a instead a civil rights issue.

We claim that we have a right to enter restaurants through the front door and to be able to use the rest rooms just as African Americans did in the 1960s. We feel that we should be able to shop without having our wheelchairs caught up in the clothes racks. We maintain that if we go to court or are called up to serve on juries that we have access to sign language interpreters if we are deaf or assistive listening devices if we are hard of hearing. We believe that employment opportunities are not just for the lucky and the strong, and we should not be seen as charity cases any more if we are equally able to perform the essential duties of the job. In a number of cases, we have seen accommodations made along these lines. In some cases, this is not so.

Regrettably, I see the battles continuing into the next century for people with disabilities to be accepted as equal participants in our society. So often we have to go to court to make our case. Employers have already started narrowing their job descriptions. The U.S. Supreme Court has recently upheld their right to do so. Like other minorities, we must try even harder to prove ourselves as worthwhile individuals for them to hire us.

The University of Tennessee Knoxville has a 20-year transition plan to make their buildings accessible. One student has filed suit, in essence stating that this is too long to wait. We shall see where that goes, but the federal inspectors have already arrived on campus this spring.

We cannot help but celebrate on recent U.S. Supreme Court case which ruled that under the ADA, states shall provide services to people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive and most integrated setting if it is economically feasible. This particular case involved two women who have mental illness. However, it has far reaching implications for those of us who are hoping that Tennessee will finally provide home and community based support services for the elderly and disabled so they will not be forced into nursing homes. We will be pressing our legislators to find the money in the budget next year to allow it to happen and to see to it that the plan adopted truly will meet the needs of everyone it is meant to serve.

This has already happened for people with developmental disabilities in Tennessee who were warehoused for years in institutions with no opportunity to live in our communities. All this is due to a court order and settlement. Now the challenge for disability advocates is to see they receive the quality services that they deserve, and to see that for folks who always lived with their relatives but who now wish to live on their own, that the waiting lists for services for them are reduced as well.

I dream of a time when people with disabilities are accepted as valuable members of society without angry, lengthy, and expensive court trials or the threat of such. I do not think it is too much to ask for us to be allowed to share in all that life has to offer. Because you will benefit by meeting some truly dynamic people, I ask that you join the disability community in making that dream come true in this next century and celebrate with us July 26, our day of independence.

Louise McKown

Public Awareness Coordinator for the East Tennessee Technology Access Center
Board chair for the Tennessee Disability Coalition

102 Emory Lane, Oak Ridge, TN 37830 H) 483-1822 W) 219-0130