

# FOIA MARKER

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Revisions for Issue Briefs, 11/96: Issue Briefs: Americans with Disabilities

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E X E C U T I V E   O F F I C E   O F   T H E   P R E S I D E N T

26-Sep-1996 10:43am

TO:            Ann F. Walker

FROM:          Diana M. Fortuna  
                Domestic Policy Council

CC:            William White

SUBJECT:      Disability issue brief/talking points

We should add to our issue brief/talking points on disability policy one new item: the mental health parity provision that the President is signing into law today as part of VA/HUD. I don't know who has control of the document at this point -- I assume it's you rather than me -- but let me know if you want me to fold it in. It's definitely an important achievement for a major segment of the disability community.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Add #1: Mental Health Parity:** Largely due to the work of the Administration, health plans can no longer establish separate lifetime and annual limits for mental health coverage.

**Add #2: Health Insurance:** Signed the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance reform bill, which prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions.

**Delete #1:** The President has proposed a balanced budget that maintains meaningful health benefits for people with disabilities and supports insurance reforms to prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions.

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

*"Opportunity is critical to what we have to do as a nation to meet the great challenges we face and to move forward into the next century...We will not allow Americans with disabilities to be kept from realizing their dreams by closed doors or narrow minds."*

President Bill Clinton

July 26, 1995

President Clinton came to Washington with a plan to put people first by making the government more accountable and accessible to all Americans, including those with disabilities. From the White House to every federal agency, this Administration has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to address the concerns of Americans with disabilities. The President is committed to supporting the 49 million Americans with disabilities in their efforts to exercise their full rights and responsibilities, to live as independently as possible and to be productive throughout their lives.

### **A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- **Fighting Discrimination:** Under President Clinton, federal agencies have vigorously enforced the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other critical civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities in schools, workplaces and public areas across the nation. President Clinton strongly opposes attempts to weaken these laws.
- **Protecting Health Care:** The Clinton Administration refuses to go backwards on health care coverage for Americans with disabilities and has rejected proposals to end the Medicaid guarantee to meaningful health benefits for people with disabilities. President Clinton has preserved Medicaid coverage for 6 million persons with disabilities, including 1 million children. Without Medicaid, many families would have to impoverish themselves to pay for a child's medical care, give up their jobs to stay home to care for a child or seek placement in an institution. Medicaid is often the only form of health care available to people with disabilities and allows many children and adults to receive services at home rather than in institutions.
- **Improving Education for Children with Disabilities:** President Clinton is fighting to increase the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's focus on educational results for children and cutting unnecessary paperwork so that more time can be spent on teaching and learning. The Administration has recommended a 12% increase above the 1996 funding level for the basic state grant program and opposes weakening the guarantee of a right to education for children with disabilities.
- **Increasing Home and Community-Based Programs:** The Clinton Administration's flexibility in granting state waivers has spurred an increase in home and community-based services. As a result, the number of people with developmental or cognitive disabilities served in home and community waiver programs nearly doubled to 122,000 in 1994.

- **Support for Families:** President Clinton fought for and enacted the Family and Medical Leave Act making workplaces more accommodating for many families that include a child or adult with a disability. In 1995, the President vetoed a budget bill that would have significantly cut cash assistance to most families with disabled children on Social Security -- families who are struggling to care for a child at home and face extra costs for home modifications, equipment and income lost because a parent is unable to work full-time.
- **Increasing Access:** By enacting the National Voter Registration Act and the Telecommunications Reform Act, President Clinton has made voting easier and communications technology more accessible for Americans with disabilities.
- **Transportation and Housing:** The Clinton Administration is helping to connect people with disabilities to employment, educational opportunities and a full range of public activities by ensuring that Americans with Disabilities Act and Fair Housing Act requirements for accessible bus and rail transit systems, paratransit services and housing are fully implemented.
- **Employment of People with Disabilities:** The Clinton Administration is offering individuals with disabilities the opportunity to increase their independence through rehabilitation services and work incentive programs.
- **Appointees with Disabilities:** The President has appointed an impressive group of people with disabilities to high-level policy-making positions, including many people prominent in the disability community. Many of these appointments are to key positions that are not directly related to disability issues.

SEE ADD (BUTASCO) ~~OR~~  
THE CHALLENGES AHEAD: #1 & #2

- Under President Clinton, federal agencies will continue to vigorously enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act with a balanced approach that emphasizes voluntary compliance wherever possible.
- ~~The President has proposed a balanced budget that maintains meaningful health benefits for people with disabilities and supports insurance reforms to prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions.~~  
SEE DELETE #1
- President Clinton is committed to expanding employment options for people with disabilities and challenging all Americans to understand that people with disabilities can contribute to this country when given access to the workplace, health care, community services and technology.
- The Clinton Administration will work to maintain a strong Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for children with disabilities and to improve educational results for students with disabilities.