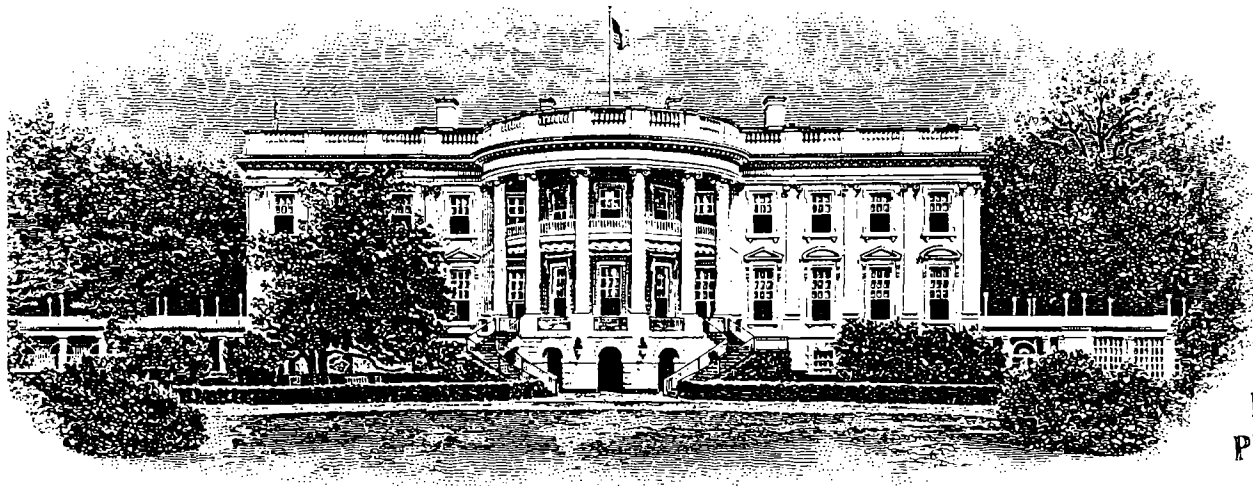




# The White House



**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

- ① - Today - Worker Incentives Improvement Act  
- Breatoran  
- 7th Anniversary of ADA on July 26th  
- EO penalty on hiring w/ practice for disabled (phone)  
- Link / Foreknowledge of Mental Health Conference  
- Tippin's Rule Institute

- ② Saturday - J.F. Radio Address  
- National Anti Slavery Council By Al Gurell  
of SCJ office  
- Tippin Honorary Chair  
- Dispel Myths / Open doors to treatment

- ③ 1st ever WtI Conference  
All 4 parties  
9 Dept & Agency Heads, including 5 Secretaries  
22 Members of Congress - Bipartisan  
- Over 1000 San Luis Conference  
Planner / Mike Walker  
Satchu

June 3, 1999

**PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
PRESIDENT'S AWARD CEREMONY**

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>DATE:</b>          | June 4, 1999                 |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>      | East Room                    |
| <b>BRIEFING TIME:</b> | 2:00pm – 2:30pm              |
| <b>EVENT TIME:</b>    | 2:40pm – 3:15pm              |
| <b>FROM:</b>          | Mary Beth Cahill, Bruce Reed |

**I. PURPOSE**

To present the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD) President's Award; to call on Congress to pass the Jeffords-Kennedy legislation by the July anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act; and to announce an executive order to ensure that the same federal hiring standards apply to people with psychiatric disabilities as to people with other disabilities.

**II. BACKGROUND**

Established in 1947 by President Harry Truman, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is a small federal agency that reports to the President on progress and problems related to disability employment issues. Under the leadership of Chairman Tony Coelho, some 300 members promote public and private efforts to enhance the employment of individuals with disabilities. The Committee provides information, training, and technical assistance to America's business leaders, organized labor, rehabilitation and service providers, advocacy organizations, families, and individuals with disabilities. Among the Committee's services are the Job Accommodation Network, the Business Leadership Network, High School/High Tech, Project EMPLOY and the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, which during the past year placed 300 people with disabilities in private and public sector jobs.

The President's Award is America's highest honor for achievement in furthering the employment and empowerment of people with disabilities. An annual recipient is selected from a national slate of nominees. Honorees have demonstrated outstanding achievements in the world of work and made significant contributions to increase public awareness about Americans with disabilities in the workforce. Since 1947, the award has been presented only six times at the White House, three of those times by you.

Today you will present awards to the following honorees:

**Joyce Bender** is the president of Bender Consulting Services (BCS), which actively recruits and hires people with disabilities who have expertise in information technologies. BCS contracts these employees as consultants to client companies throughout the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, Delaware areas. In 1985, Ms. Bender sustained a life-threatening epileptic attack that caused an intracranial hemorrhage requiring brain surgery. She returned to work with a seizure disorder, a 40 percent hearing loss in one ear and a renewed respect for the attitudinal obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities. Employment of people with disabilities has become her life's work.

**James H. Click, Jr.** founded the non-profit LINKAGES program in Tucson, Arizona, as a one-stop shop for employers who want to hire people with disabilities. A LINKAGES liaison works with local rehabilitation agencies to identify qualified candidates for every position. Since 1998, some 80 employers have hired more than 170 people with disabilities through the program. As president of the Jim Click Automotive Team, Mr. Click is also a LINKAGES employer. Approximately 35 individuals with disabilities are working in his car dealership franchises throughout Arizona and California. His dream is to take LINKAGES throughout the country.

**Laura Hershey** is a grass roots leader who has tirelessly advocated for reform in the Social Security system, housing, transportation and other areas affecting the livelihood of Americans with disabilities. She is best known for mobilizing the PASS Participants Rights Campaign to fight for the rights of adults with severe disabilities to pursue employment and maintain their eligibility for Medicaid coverage. Ms. Hershey has served as interim executive director of the Denver Disability Center for Independent Living and is a former director of the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities. She consults and writes frequently on disability issues.

Today you will also:

**Announce the Signing of 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 for people with psychiatric disabilities. Today, you 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, you will urge Congress to pass this important and long overdue legislation by July 26, the ninth anniversary of the ADA.

## I. PARTICIPANTS

### Briefing Participants:

Mary Beth Cahill  
Bruce Reed  
Chris Jennings  
Janet Murguia  
Jonathan Young  
June Shih

### Stage Participants:

Joyce Bender  
James H. Click, Jr.  
Laura Hershey

### Program Participants:

Secretary Alexis Herman  
Jill Rickgauer

*Jill Rickgauer is currently employed as a switchboard receptionist for a large automotive dealer in Tuscon, Arizona, the Jim Click Automotive Group. Soon after becoming blind in 1991, Ms. Rickgauer lost her job as a career planner for college students due to downsizing. With assistance from the Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Mrs. Rickgauer learned to navigate daily living as a blind person and use assistive technology. Despite her solid resume and new skills, she faced extensive discrimination from employers, who offered many*

*interviews but no jobs. Ms. Rickgauer identified and successfully obtained her current position through Jim Click's LINKAGES program.*

## **II. PRESS PLAN**

Open Press.

## **III. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

- **YOU** will greet the award winners and their families in the Blue Room.
- **YOU** will be announced, accompanied by Secretary Alexis Herman, Joyce Bender, James Click, Laura Hershey, and Jill Rickgauer, into the East Room.
- Secretary Herman will make remarks and introduce Jill Rickgauer.
- Jill Rickgauer will make remarks and introduce **YOU**.
- **YOU** will make remarks, present the President's Awards, and depart.

## **VI. REMARKS**

To be provided by speechwriting.

## **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 and promotion standards for psychiatric disabilities, an issue highlighted by Mrs. Gore earlier this year. He also challenged the Congress to pass the historic, bipartisan Work Incentives Improvement Act by July 26, the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. 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. However, over 75 percent of individuals with psychiatric disabilities are unemployed. This new action, together with the new provisions in the Work Incentives Improvement Act 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. 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 applied to federal hiring practices for people with psychiatric disabilities. Today, the President will sign an executive order modernizing these twenty two year-old rules which:

- 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.

### **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 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.

# Hiring Rules to Change For Mentally Disabled

By STEPHEN BARR  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

President Clinton will issue an executive order today that makes it easier for the federal government to hire people with psychiatric disabilities, officials at the Office of Personnel Management said yesterday.

The executive order will change decades-old civil service rules to give persons with psychiatric problems the same employment opportunities currently provided to persons with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation, the officials said.

Today's announcement comes just days before the White House convenes a conference on mental health to be chaired by Tipper Gore, the vice president's spouse, and follows the recommendations of the administration's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities.

Currently, federal agencies may use a special hiring authority to offer temporary jobs to persons with psychiatric problems. But those jobs end after two years, usually forcing the employees to leave the government or face competition from other job-seekers when reapplying for federal employment.

The executive order will give agencies the authority to allow persons with psychiatric disabilities to stay in their jobs and join the civil service as permanent employees if they carry out their duties successfully.

Officials said the rule change would "level the playing field," since the rules already permit agencies to use the special hiring authority to permanently hire persons with physical disabilities or mental retardation.

In virtually all cases, the officials said, the initial, two-year appointment would serve as a screening period and allow per-

sons with psychiatric disabilities to demonstrate that they can control their emotional or mental difficulties.

Officials said that when the hiring rules were created more than 20 years ago, attitudes about mental illness were different, resulting in different standards being applied to persons with psychiatric disabilities.

"I believe that by eliminating these hurdles, we will go a long way toward eradicating the stigma associated with mental illness. Our nation can only benefit when all people are given a chance to contribute," OPM Director Janice R. Lachance said in a statement prepared for today's announcement.

Last year, 124,139 executive branch employees voluntarily identified themselves as either physically or mentally disabled—about 7 percent of the government's work force.

Clinton's executive order will direct OPM to draft regulations and allow for a period of public comment before they are issued. OPM officials said they plan to move quickly, once Clinton has signed the order.

## Clinton Attacks GOP Budget Priorities

Reuters

President Clinton derided the Republican-controlled Congress's budget plan as a "blueprint for chaos" that would slash spending in critical areas including education, law enforcement, and the environment.

Attacking Congress yesterday while lawmakers are on vacation, Clinton blasted the Republicans for drawing up broad budget plans that would force sharp cuts to stay within spending "caps" laid out in

the 1997 balanced-budget agreement.

The White House wants to boost spending in fiscal 2000, which starts on Oct. 1, in a host of areas, notably education, defense and the environment, but aims to stay within the budget caps in part by raising cigarette taxes and other fees.

"Unfortunately, the Republican majority in Congress is moving ahead with a budget plan that in the end may do none of these things," Clinton told reporters. "It fails to extend the solvency of Social Secu-

rity and Medicare. It requires deep cuts... [and] is simply not realistic. It is a blueprint for chaos, and we can do better."

Speaking to reporters in the Rose Garden, Clinton argued that such budget cuts were so unrealistic that Congress has been unable to pass any of the 13 annual spending bills needed to fund the government.

Congress is struggling to write these appropriations bills to fit under a \$538 billion limit that requires cutting spending more than \$20 billion from last year's levels.

*The Washington Post*

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1999

all the commentators who castigated the White House for utterly and completely bungling the war might say they were wrong?

Not a chance.

"Can anybody out there tell me who won?" Oliver North asked on his conservative radio show. The

answer, he said, was "partly Slobodan Milosevic set out to do one thing: drive the Kosovar Albanians from their homelands. He has done so."

Rather than credit "our beloved impeached leader," North said the war "may be ending just in time to save Al Gore's hide."

Rich Lowry, editor of National Review, which has urged the use of ground troops, said: "Even if Clinton wins a decent deal from Milosevic, he's not going to go down as our Churchill or Eisenhower. It's been a creepy and cowardly war. ... The original goal, saving the

Kosovars, was lost in the first several weeks. When 90 percent of the people were chased out of their homes, that was what the war was designed to stop."

Bill Kristol, editor of the Weekly Standard, who strongly argued the need for ground troops, was more gracious. "Sure it's a victory for Clinton," he said. "It's also a victory for Republicans who supported the war, which is not a majority. ... Some congressional Republicans look pretty silly. There will be a temptation among some conservatives to be niggling in praising Clinton, and that would be a mistake."

As for his own prognostications: "I thought ground troops would be necessary. I think the threat of them helped in the last two or three weeks. I probably underestimated the efficacy of air power alone."

One former Clintonite didn't hesitate to indulge in a full gloat.

"The punditocracy in Washington has not been this wrong on something this important since way back in the dark days of impeachment," said Paul Begala, North's co-host on MSNBC's "Equal Time." "For the partisans, their hatred of Clin-

ed a new drama. Journalists from around the world were dispatched to Belgrade, "Crisis in Kosovo" logos were prepared, specials and town meetings hastily arranged.

But the media seem to have tired of the story lately; Day 60 or 70 of the bombing is not quite as compelling as Day 2 or 3. The refugee story gradually faded. Even the calamities, such as the NATO bombing of another hospital or train or bridge, were treated in more routine fashion. A growing share of ink and air time was devoted to Campaign 2000 and Hillary 2000.

In the war's first four weeks, according to the Center for Media and Public Affairs, the CBS, NBC and ABC evening news averaged 23 stories a night on Kosovo. In the following three weeks—a period that coincided with the Littleton shootings—the average number of stories dropped to 11 each night. And from May 12 through June 1, the networks aired seven war stories a night.

Even yesterday, echoing the administration's caution, the cable networks appeared as interested in Wednesday's plane crash in Little Rock and Hillary Rodham Clinton's all-but-certain Senate bid as in the news that Balkans peace might be at hand.

The post-deal dissection of the peace plan—and, for the moment, the bombing continues—is no simple affair. To paraphrase the president, it depends on what the definition of "victory" is. And it depends on each commentator's stance on the war.

Tony Blankley, the former Newt Gingrich spokesman, opposed the war on grounds that national security was not jeopardized and NATO would be damaged. "There's a fairly simple measure of success—whether the vast majority of Kosovars can return to their homes," he said. "Then we'll be able to judge whether the president racked up a victory or not. It would be nice to wrap it all up by the evening news, but I think we have to wait."

Chicago Tribune columnist Clarence Page feared a Vietnam-style debacle and backed a negotiated partition of Kosovo. "I'm still a little skeptical; the devil's in the details," he said.

Page said there had been "a sense in the pantheon of punditry that this was just a disaster building up toward a quagmire, and all of a sudden we see the light at the end of the tunnel. We may see an interesting bit of pundit spin. The I-knew-it-all-along line shifts from 'the bombing's not going to work' to 'they weren't that far apart anyway.'"

So what will the critics say now? "There are two competing impulses at play," Blankley said. "One is never publicly admit you're wrong. And the other is not to be on the losing side of a conventional consensus. I'm not sure which of those sentiments will trump the other, but it will be fun to watch."

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1999

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

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

**A:** Today, the President will sign an executive order changing federal employment rules so that the same standards apply to people with psychiatric disabilities as to people with other disabilities. The President took this action after Mrs. Gore called attention earlier this year to the use of stricter standards for people with psychiatric disabilities under current law. 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 hiring rules and authority used for individuals with other disabilities.
- Permit 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, 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, First Lady, 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 in the 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.

# TALKING POINTS

Executive Order for Those with Psychiatric Disabilities

US OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

June 3, 1999

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- It is the policy of this Administration, and one of the fundamental principles of our American democracy, to promote equal opportunity, full participation, and self-sufficiency for all our people, including people with disabilities.
- The Federal Government, as an employer, has an obligation to serve as a model for the successful employment of persons with disabilities.
- Times have changed. We recognize now that people with psychiatric disabilities have much to contribute to our society, and that they should be given the same opportunities available to people with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities.
- 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.
- 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 I am issuing 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.
- I want to thank OPM Director Janice Lachance for her leadership in this effort. She has helped us find an equitable solution for the Federal Government, people with psychiatric disabilities, and ultimately all the people of our nation, and I am grateful for her efforts.

**Initial Recommendations to the President from the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities:**

*The Task Force recommends that: The President direct Office of Personnel Management and other appropriate agencies to explore measures aimed at eliminating the stricter standards currently applied to adults with psychiatric disabilities and to extend to these individuals opportunities currently available to individuals with mental retardation and severe physical disabilities. [page 15]*

**I. BACKGROUND:** Excepted appointing authorities exempt individuals from the competitive appointment process and offer an alternative means to obtain federal employment. The use of excepted appointing authorities can increase the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

There are three primary excepted appointing authorities applicable to individuals with disabilities. Under Schedule A regulations, excepted appointments for positions filled by individuals with mental retardation and individuals with severe physical disabilities were established. Individual hired under these appointing authorities can convert to competitive status in the civil service after completion of two years of satisfactory service in their excepted positions. This conversion authority was authorized by Executive Order 12125. Under Schedule B regulations, agencies are authorized to make appointments of individuals who are at a severe disadvantage because of a psychiatric disability that has caused a significant period of substantially disrupted employment.

The Schedule B appointing authority treats individuals with severe psychiatric disabilities differently from individuals with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation who are eligible for special appointment under Schedule A. First, unlike appointments under Schedule A, these appointments are subject to the basic qualification standards established by OPM. Second, there is a two-year limitation on appointments and no mechanism for conversion to the competitive civil service.

The differences reflect the evolutionary process of developing special Federal employment opportunities for people with disabilities and changing perceptions regarding the nature of what constitutes a permanent disability. For instance, the Schedule A special appointing authorities for persons with disabilities can be traced back to the early 1960's, when Federal agencies were authorized to make temporary limited appointments for the "severely handicapped." In contrast, the Schedule B excepted appointing authority for persons with psychiatric disabilities was established in 1980 to provide persons with past mental illness an opportunity to demonstrate their readiness for employment and to regain recent work experience. This intent was based at least in part upon the belief that individuals who had "recovered" from a psychiatric condition needed only an opportunity to supplement a resume after a period of extended unemployment, and thereafter would be able to compete for employment through the regular competitive process.

Experience has shown, however, that some conditions, such as major depression, from which an individual may appear to have "recovered" can recur in the future, and thus may impose limitations that are as real and life-long as the limitations imposed by physical disabilities. Moreover, even the record of a psychiatric condition from which an individual has in fact recovered may often pose a barrier to employment. Finally, the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA have never distinguished between physical and mental disabilities, but instead recognize that all individuals with disabilities face similar social, economic, and employment barriers.

**II. CONCLUSION:** Individuals with psychiatric disabilities face many of the same barriers to employment as are encountered by individuals with severe physical disabilities and mental retardation. They, therefore, should be offered the same opportunities, including the opportunity to convert to the competitive service. An executive order (or new legislation) would be needed to make this possible.

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# **EXECUTIVE ORDER FOR THOSE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES**

## **Questions and Answers**

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**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 the 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.**

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 Executive order necessary to give people with psychiatric disabilities the same hiring standards as other disabled individuals?

A. **Yes. In order to convert these excepted appointments to the competitive service, an Executive order (or legislation) was required.**

## 1997 MENTAL HEALTH CLAIMS DATA

### Mental Health \* Claims

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Inpatient  | \$122,427,937 |
| Outpatient | \$175,255,652 |
| All        | \$297,683,590 |

### Individuals Receiving Service

|                         |         |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Inpatient Mental Health | 29,032  |
| All                     | 507,847 |

Total Individuals Covered 8,683,628

\* Data projected from subset of plans

## MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

Two dollars out of every one hundred spent in the FEHBP is for mental health services. This does not include drugs purchased to treat mental illness since those drugs are covered the same for all illnesses.

One out of every twenty individuals covered by the FEHBP will use some form of mental health benefits during a year.

We estimate that out of 8.7 million lives covered by the FEHBP, 500,000 will use a mental health benefit each year.

The 1999 cost of providing mental health benefits in the FEHBP is \$3.64 per member per month.

Two thirds of enrollees who use mental health outpatient services use less than five visits per year.

Three out of every 1000 people covered in our program use inpatient mental health services per year.

## MENTAL HEALTH COSTS

The cost of providing mental health parity in the FEHB cannot be determined until contracts with providers are negotiated and premiums are set.

Estimates are that full parity will cost up to \$.25 per day which would bring mental health costs to 4.0 percent of total program costs. Based on 4 million policy holders this would result in an increase of 2 percent, or \$358 million. If this assumption holds, the enrollee share of the biweekly non-postal premiums would increase approximately \$.61 per self contract and \$1.30 per family contract. The government's share would increase approximately \$1.40 and \$3.16 respectively.

OPM - Q+A

Q. Does this mean that people with violent tendencies will receive an appointment?

**A. The employment efforts of people with psychiatric disabilities have been hindered for many years by a false perception. Due to stereotyping in the entertainment industry, and media reports of a small number of sensationalized cases, the perception exists that much of the violence in the workplace is committed by individuals who have a psychiatric illness. The truth is that most people with psychiatric illnesses are not predisposed to violence.**

**This Executive order does not change the manner in which an applicant for a Federal job is considered for appointment.**

**Since 1883, the Federal Government has used suitability requirements to evaluate Federal job applicants. ANYONE who is being considered for a permanent Federal job in the competitive service, regardless of the appointment, must meet suitability requirements – character, reputation, trustworthiness, and fitness – to perform the work of the position. If the individual does not meet these requirements, he or she will not be appointed.**

**For positions in the excepted service, each agency establishes standards clarifying what may disqualify an applicant from appointment. Applicants are evaluated**

**based on these standards.**

**In addition, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), uses a publication called EEOC Enforcement Guidance: The Americans with Disabilities Act and Psychiatric Disabilities, to advise employers about the appropriate factors to be considered when hiring individuals with a history of violence or threats of violence.**

**The Executive order does not change this.**

**Federal agencies are not required to excuse a violation of their standards of conduct just because an employee has, or claims to have, a disability. Agencies can discipline such an employee in exactly the same way they would any other employee acting violently in the workplace.**

**In short, a Federal employee who exhibits violent behavior in the workplace is accountable for that behavior and will be disciplined and/or dismissed as is appropriate.**

● June Shih

06/03/99 09:04:20 PM

Record Type: Record

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

cc:

Subject: final

Draft 6/3/99 9 pm

Shih

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON  
REMARKS FOR PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON  
THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AWARDS  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
JUNE 4, 1999**

**Acknowledgments:** Sec. Hermann; Janice La Chance. OPM; Tony Coehlo, Chair, President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; Justin Dart; Jill Rickgauer, employee.

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] 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 more and more people 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 Americans with disabilities who have never been allowed to answer that question, who have never had the chance to participate in that essential element of the American Dream. Even as we celebrate more than 18 million new jobs and a nationwide unemployment rate of 4.3 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 Americans with disabilities. 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 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 Americans with disabilities, 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 the responsibility to work and become full-fledged members of our American community. It is time to change.

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, Kennedy, Roth and Moynihan; and Reps. Lazio, Waxman, Bliley and Dingell has awaited passage 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 open those doors even wider -- so that more Americans with disabilities can join the proud ranks of working citizens.

There is 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. 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 America 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 one person 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. She has founded a new program to train even more disabled people in high-tech skills that are the ticket to the world of work. 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 – as we heard from Jill's testimonial. A few years ago, Jim discovered that he could encourage more businesses to follow his lead by making it easier for them to find workers with the right skills. 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 to 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 make the world a better place for people with disabilities. 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 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 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:

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# TALKING POINTS

Executive Order for Those with Psychiatric Disabilities

US OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

June 3, 1999

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- It is the policy of this Administration, and one of the fundamental principles of our American democracy, to promote equal opportunity, full participation, and self-sufficiency for all our people, including people with disabilities.
  - The Federal Government, as an employer, has an obligation to serve as a model for the successful employment of persons with disabilities.
  - Times have changed. We recognize now that people with psychiatric disabilities have much to contribute to our society, and that they should be given the same opportunities available to people with mental retardation or severe physical disabilities.
  - 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.
  - 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 I am issuing 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.
  - I want to thank OPM Director Janice Lachance for her leadership in this effort. She has helped us find an equitable solution for the Federal Government, people with psychiatric disabilities, and ultimately all the people of our nation, and I am grateful for her efforts.

## **Initial Recommendations to the President from the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities:**

*The Task Force recommends that: The President direct Office of Personnel Management and other appropriate agencies to explore measures aimed at eliminating the stricter standards currently applied to adults with psychiatric disabilities and to extend to these individuals opportunities currently available to individuals with mental retardation and severe physical disabilities. [page 15]*

**I. BACKGROUND:** Excepted appointing authorities exempt individuals from the competitive appointment process and offer an alternative means to obtain federal employment. The use of excepted appointing authorities can increase the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

There are three primary excepted appointing authorities applicable to individuals with disabilities. Under Schedule A regulations, excepted appointments for positions filled by individuals with mental retardation and individuals with severe physical disabilities were established. Individual hired under these appointing authorities can convert to competitive status in the civil service after completion of two years of satisfactory service in their excepted positions. This conversion authority was authorized by Executive Order 12125. Under Schedule B regulations, agencies are authorized to make appointments of individuals who are at a severe disadvantage because of a psychiatric disability that has caused a significant period of substantially disrupted employment.

The Schedule B appointing authority treats individuals with severe psychiatric disabilities differently from individuals with severe physical disabilities or mental retardation who are eligible for special appointment under Schedule A. First, unlike appointments under Schedule A, these appointments are subject to the basic qualification standards established by OPM. Second, there is a two-year limitation on appointments and no mechanism for conversion to the competitive civil service.

The differences reflect the evolutionary process of developing special Federal employment opportunities for people with disabilities and changing perceptions regarding the nature of what constitutes a permanent disability. For instance, the Schedule A special appointing authorities for persons with disabilities can be traced back to the early 1960's, when Federal agencies were authorized to make temporary limited appointments for the "severely handicapped." In contrast, the Schedule B excepted appointing authority for persons with psychiatric disabilities was established in 1980 to provide persons with past mental illness an opportunity to demonstrate their readiness for employment and to regain recent work experience. This intent was based at least in part upon the belief that individuals who had "recovered" from a psychiatric condition needed only an opportunity to supplement a resume after a period of extended unemployment, and thereafter would be able to compete for employment through the regular competitive process.

Experience has shown, however, that some conditions, such as major depression, from which an individual may appear to have "recovered" can recur in the future, and thus may impose limitations that are as real and life-long as the limitations imposed by physical disabilities. Moreover, even the record of a psychiatric condition from which an individual has in fact recovered may often pose a barrier to employment. Finally, the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA have never distinguished between physical and mental disabilities, but instead recognize that all individuals with disabilities face similar social, economic, and employment barriers.

**II. CONCLUSION:** Individuals with psychiatric disabilities face many of the same barriers to employment as are encountered by individuals with severe physical disabilities and mental retardation. They, therefore, should be offered the same opportunities, including the opportunity to convert to the competitive service. An executive order (or new legislation) would be needed to make this possible.

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# **EXECUTIVE ORDER FOR THOSE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES**

## **Questions and Answers**

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**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 the 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.**

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 Executive order necessary to give people with psychiatric disabilities the same hiring standards as other disabled individuals?

A. **Yes. In order to convert these excepted appointments to the competitive service, an Executive order (or legislation) was required.**

**1997 MENTAL HEALTH CLAIMS DATA****Mental Health \*  
Claims**

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Inpatient  | \$122,427,937 |
| Outpatient | \$175,255,652 |
| All        | \$297,683,590 |

**Individuals Receiving Service**

|                         |         |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Inpatient Mental Health | 29,032  |
| All                     | 507,847 |

|                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Total Individuals Covered | 8,683,628 |
|---------------------------|-----------|

\* Data projected from subset of plans

**MENTAL HEALTH FACTS**

Two dollars out of every one hundred spent in the FEHBP is for mental health services. This does not include drugs purchased to treat mental illness since those drugs are covered the same for all illnesses.

One out of every twenty Individuals covered by the FEHBP will use some form of mental health benefits during a year.

We estimate that out of 8.7 million lives covered by the FEHBP, 500,000 will use a mental health benefit each year.

The 1999 cost of providing mental health benefits in the FEHBP is \$3.64 per member per month.

Two thirds of enrollees who use mental health outpatient services use less than five visits per year.

Three out of every 1000 people covered in our program use inpatient mental health services per year.

**MENTAL HEALTH COSTS**

The cost of providing mental health parity in the FEHB cannot be determined until contracts with providers are negotiated and premiums are set.

Estimates are that full parity will cost up to \$.25 per day which would bring mental health costs to 4.0 percent of total program costs. Based on 4 million policy holders this would result in an increase of 2 percent, or \$358 million. If this assumption holds, the enrollee share of the biweekly non-postal premiums would increase approximately \$.61 per self contract and \$1.30 per family contract. The government's share would increase approximately \$1.40 and \$3.16 respectively.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE:**  
***Increasing Opportunities for Americans With Disabilities***

*"Increased access to health care, more assistance at home and in the workplace, remarkable new technologies made more available: This is how we can make sure that all Americans can take their rightful place in our 21st century workplaces."*

President Clinton  
January 13, 1999

President Clinton and Vice President Gore are committed to expanding opportunities for Americans with disabilities and demonstrating to all Americans that people with disabilities -- given access to the workplace, health care, community services, and technology -- make significant contributions to our society and economy.

The new executive action the President is taking today to eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, together with his renewed call to Congress to swiftly pass the Work Incentives Improvement Act, build on a longstanding commitment to improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

**EXPANDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

**Fighting to Enact the Work Incentives Improvement Act (WIIA).** The President included the Work Incentives Improvement Act in his FY 2000 budget, an historic, bipartisan initiative sponsored by Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, Roth and Moynihan that removes significant barriers to work for individuals with disabilities. This initiative has received overwhelming support from Congress, collecting over 75 cosponsors in the Senate alone, and from members of the disability community.

This important new initiative for people with disabilities and provides better health care options for people with disabilities who work by: (1) expanding states' ability to provide a Medicaid buy-in to people with disabilities who return to work; (2) extending Medicare coverage, for the first time, for people with disabilities who return to work; and (3) creating 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.

In addition, WIIA will modernize the employment services system by creating a "ticket" that will enable Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (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. And WIIA creates a Work Incentive Grant program to provide benefits planning and assistance, facilitating 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.** On January 13, 1999, the President announced a new proposal that will allow workers with significant disabilities to 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. Like the Jeffords-Kennedy-Roth-Moynihan Work Incentives Improvement Act, 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.

**Establishing the Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities.** On March 13, 1998, President Clinton signed an Executive Order establishing a National Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, charged with creating a coordinated and aggressive national policy to bring adults with disabilities into gainful employment at a rate that is as close as possible to that of the general adult population. According to a 1998 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, only 30 percent of persons with severe disabilities were in the labor force in the third quarter of 1994 (latest data available).

**Taking Action on All of the Task Force's Formal Recommendations.** In December, the Vice President accepted the report of the President's Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities. Alexis M. Herman, Secretary of Labor, chairs the Task Force and Tony Coelho, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, serve as Vice-Chair. The Administration has taken action on all the Task Force formal recommendations: work to pass the Work Incentive Improvement Act; work to pass a strong Patients' Bill of Rights; examine tax options to assist with expenses of work; foster interdisciplinary consortia for employment services; accelerate development and adoption of assistive technology; direct Small Business Administration to expand outreach; remove Federal hiring barriers for people with mental illness and direct the Office of Personnel Management to develop model plan for Federal hiring of people with disabilities.

**Signing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Improving Worker Training and Placement Options for People with Disabilities.** Last year, the President signed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which included the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The new Act establishes better links between the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system and the general workforce development system. Job seekers with disabilities will have improved options for service through the mainstream worker training and placement system, as well as through the disability-specific VR system. The U.S. Department of Labor, with assistance from the Department of Education, has been providing valuable technical assistance to the network of one-stop career centers on how to provide nondiscriminatory and accessible services to people with disabilities. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act has also been strengthened to give increased options to individuals with disabilities in developing employment plans.

**Working on Innovative Strategies to Improve Employment of Adults with Disabilities.** Agencies within the Clinton Administration continue to work on innovative strategies to employ Americans with disabilities. The Social Security Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and the Department of Education are all participating in inter-agency demonstration projects to expand employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. For instance, the Department of Education has awarded six systems-change grants to establish models of improved cooperation and coordination between State Vocational Rehabilitation programs, public employment/employment training programs, and other related programs. The grants will assist in reducing barriers to employment and increasing the capacity of the State's overall employment system

to serve individuals with disabilities. The focus of these systems change projects is increasing the employment rate of individuals with disabilities who are currently receiving support through public programs.

**Supporting Families.** President Clinton fought for and enacted the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) making workplaces more accommodating for many families that include a child or adult with a disability. In his 1999 State of the Union, the President proposed to extend the benefits of the Family and Medical Leave Act to ten million more American workers. Currently, only workers who are employed at businesses with 50 or more employees are protected. By covering workers in businesses with 25 or more workers, 10 million more American workers will be covered by the FMLA. The President also called for expanding the law to allow FMLA-eligible workers to take up to 24 hours of additional leave each year to meet specified family obligations, such as accompany one's child to dental or medical appointments.

**Helping Move People from Welfare to Work.** Some of those who are having the hardest time moving from welfare to work are people with disabilities. Recognizing the special needs of this and other hard-to-place populations, the 1997 Balanced Budget Act included \$3 billion to assist long-term welfare recipients obtain jobs. In addition, the FY99 budget included a number of measures designed to expand welfare to work activities. The final budget included \$283 million for 50,000 new vouchers exclusively for people who need housing assistance to make the transition from welfare to work and \$75 million to assist states and localities in developing flexible transportation alternatives, such as van services. For FY 2000, the President announced that he will propose an additional \$1 billion for his Welfare-to-Work program to ensure that those remaining on the welfare rolls who face the greatest challenges can succeed in the workforce and to increase the employment of fathers of children on welfare so they can better support their children.

**Funding a Disability Research Institute.** The Vice President recently announced that the Social Security Administration will fund a Disability Research Institute to help provide policy-makers with information and research data in the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability policy area, including ways to assess work ability and return-to-work strategies.

## **HELPING TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE**

**Fighting to Pass a Strong, Enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights .** President Clinton has called on the Congress to pass a strong, enforceable patients' bill of rights that assures Americans the quality health care they need. The bill should include important patient protections such as: assuring direct access to specialists; real emergency room protections; continuity of care provisions that protect patients from abrupt changes in treatment; a fair, timely, and independent appeals process for patient grievances; and enforcement provisions to make these rights real.

**Proposing New Initiatives to Improve Prevention and Treatment and Fairness for People with Mental Illnesses.** The President and Vice President advocated for and enacted the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996, which took steps to end discrimination based on mental illnesses. On January 14, 1999, Mrs. Gore unveiled three new major initiatives, including: an unprecedented \$70 million

increase in the mental health services block grant, a 24 percent increase, totaling \$358 million for FY2000, which will enable states to target particularly-hard-to-reach adults and children with severe mental illnesses; the announcement of a White House Conference on Mental Health to be held this spring; and a Presidential request to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to explore measures to eliminate the stricter standards currently applied to federal hiring practices for adults with psychiatric disabilities.

**Increasing Home and Community-Based Programs.** On July 29, 1998, the anniversary of the ADA, President Clinton announced that the Health Care Financing Administration was directing State Medicaid Directors to provide services to people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs and in conjunction with the Americans with Disabilities Act. State Medicaid Directors are being urged to conduct self-evaluations to ensure that their practices and procedures encourage rather than inhibit integration into communities. The Clinton Administration's flexibility in granting state waivers has spurred an increase in home and community-based services; since he took office, the President has approved over 300 such waivers. As a result, the number of people with developmental disabilities served in home and community waiver programs has increased significantly.

**Increasing Access to Health Care and Supporting Employment for Disabled Americans.** The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 created an optional program whereby States could allow people with disabilities who were earning up to 250 percent of poverty to purchase Medicaid coverage. Oregon is the first state to take advantage of this policy, and they have created a program that will let individuals go to work and get or keep Medicaid. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala has asked every governor to seriously consider this program.

**Passing Meaningful Health Insurance Reform.** President Clinton signed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 which limits exclusions for pre-existing conditions, makes coverage portable and helps individuals who lose jobs maintain coverage.

**Protecting the Medicaid Guarantee for People with Disabilities.** The Clinton Administration refuses to go backwards on health care coverage for Americans with disabilities -- rejecting proposals to end the Medicaid guarantee to meaningful health benefits for people with disabilities. The President vetoed the Republican's proposal in the 104th Congress to block grant the Medicaid program, preserving Medicaid coverage for six million persons with disabilities. 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. Thanks to President Clinton, the 1997 Balanced Budget Act preserved the Federal guarantee of Medicaid coverage for populations who depend on it.