

Obama Administration Record for People with Disabilities

“Until every American with a disability can learn in their local public school in the manner best for them, until they can apply for a job without fear of discrimination, and live and work independently in their communities if that's what they choose, we've got more work to do. As long as we as a people still too easily succumb to casual discrimination or fear of the unfamiliar, we've still got more work to do.”

-President Barack Obama, July 26, 2010

President Obama and his Administration have made significant progress and achieved real results to level the playing field for people with disabilities. This commitment has included major legislative achievements as well as significant administrative actions in support of civil rights for Americans with disabilities. Over the past three years, the Obama Administration's record in support of the disability community includes:

- **Improving Access to High-Quality Health Care:** President Obama took on the insurance industry to pass health care reform, giving people with disabilities the security of knowing they have access to quality, affordable care.
 - **Protecting Americans with Pre-Existing Conditions:** Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, private insurers can no longer deny any child coverage due to a pre-existing condition. In addition, the new Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP) provides affordable coverage for Americans who have been uninsured for six months and have a pre-existing condition. By 2014, all Americans living with pre-existing conditions will be free from discrimination and able to get the health care they need.
 - **Implementing a New Patient's Bill of Rights:** The Affordable Care Act bans the worst insurance company abuses that allowed insurers to unfairly deny, cap, and limit care. Americans have new rights to appeal insurance company decisions, choose their doctors, and get emergency care out-of-network. New simple information on health plans' benefits will be provided in a format that is easy to read. Pricing and consumer information are now available on HealthCare.gov.
 - **Ensuring Commitment to Community-Based Services:** The Affordable Care Act included the Community First Choice (CFC) Option, which is designed to give States additional resources to make community living a first choice. The CFC option allowed States to receive a six percentage point increase in federal matching funds for providing community-based attendant services and supports to eligible individuals enrolled in Medicaid.
 - **Continuing to Support Persons on the Autism Spectrum:** The President signed the reauthorization of the Combating Autism Act. This reauthorization allows important investments in research, early detection, and support and services for both children and adults on the autism spectrum to continue.

- **Holding the Line Against Cuts to Medicaid:** The President has stood firm against efforts to dismantle Medicaid. People with disabilities represent nearly 45 percent of Medicaid spending.
- **Supporting Individuals and Families Affected by Alzheimer’s Disease:** On January 4, 2011, the President signed into law the National Alzheimer’s Project Act. This law calls for the development and implementation of a national plan to respond to Alzheimer’s disease. The Administration’s Federal Advisory Council will produce a blueprint for research, treatment, long-term services, family support, and other priorities. On February 7, 2012, the Obama Administration announced new steps to fight Alzheimer’s disease, including immediately making an additional \$50 million available for cutting-edge Alzheimer’s disease research in Fiscal Year 2012. In addition, the Administration announced that its 2013 Budget boosts funding for Alzheimer’s disease research by \$80 million. The announcement also included an additional \$26 million investment in caregiver support, provider education, public awareness and improvements in data collection.
- **Preventing Hearing Loss:** The President signed into law the reauthorization of the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act, which provides funding for screening, intervention, and research of hearing loss, strengthens language to ensure better services, and requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a postdoctoral fellowship program to foster research and development in the area of early hearing detection and intervention.
- **Helping Those Living with Paralysis:** The President signed into law the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at improving the lives of Americans living with paralysis.
- **Allowing Critical Research to Continue:** The President issued an Executive Order repealing the restrictions on Federal support for human embryonic stem cell research while maintaining strict ethical guidelines. This research has the potential to improve the understanding and treatment of many diseases and conditions.
- **Strengthening Medicare:** President Obama has strengthened Medicare by reducing costs, fighting waste and fraud, and improving benefits and the quality of care for seniors. Beneficiaries enrolled in traditional Medicare are projected to save about \$4,200 on average through 2021 as a result of the Affordable Care Act.
- **Expanding Access to Work and Educational Opportunities as well as to the Transportation and Technology Essential to these Opportunities:** The Obama Administration has expanded access to work and educational opportunities for people with disabilities as well as to the transportation needed to get people to and from those opportunities and the technology that is a critical part of work, school, and daily life.
- **Making the Federal Government a Model Employer:** The President issued an Executive Order to make the Federal government a model employer of persons with

- disabilities by increasing the accountability and responsibility of agencies for their hiring practices. Each agency has developed specific plans on hiring people with disabilities, including those with targeted disabilities. Those plans provide numerical goals, include mandatory training for human resources personnel, and specifically explain the mechanisms the agency will utilize to increase hiring. The progress of each agency will be posted online, to the extent permitted by law, and each agency will have to report regularly to the President on its progress.
- **Improving Employment in the Private Sector:** The Department of Labor proposed a rule to update its regulations under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. Among other things, the proposed rule would require Federal contractors and subcontractors to set specific hiring goals and also detail specific actions in the areas of recruitment, training, record keeping, and policy dissemination – similar to those that have long been required to promote workplace equality for women and minorities.
 - **Ensuring Children with Disabilities Receive High-Quality Early Education:** The Department of Education updated regulations for the early intervention program under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The regulations focus on measuring and improving outcomes for the approximately 350,000 children served by the Part C program, with the goal of ensuring that children with developmental delays or those who have physical or mental disabilities with a high probability of resulting in developmental delays, are ready for preschool and kindergarten.
 - **Addressing Bullying:** The Department of Education issued guidance in a “Dear Colleague” letter to support educators in combating bullying in schools against all persons, including people with disabilities.
 - **Increased Access to Transportation:** The Department of Transportation amended rules under the Americans with Disabilities Act so that individuals with disabilities will have greater access to intercity, commuter, and high-speed train travel. The new rules require new station platform construction or significant renovation to enable those with disabilities to get on and off any car on a train. The difficulty or inability to board a train can be a major barrier to employment opportunities and this rule is another step toward helping Americans with disabilities get back to work.
 - **Ensuring Equal Access to Technology:** The President signed the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, which makes it easier for people who are deaf, blind, or live with a visual impairment to take advantage of technologies that many people take for granted – from navigating a TV or DVD menu to sending an email on a smart phone. It sets new standards so that Americans with disabilities have better access to technologies our economy depends on and are better equipped to compete for the jobs of the future.
 - **Ensuring that Everyone can Fully Access the Government:** The President issued a draft strategic plan for public comment to improve implementation and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 508 is designed to ensure the

- technology used by the government is fully accessible so that people with disabilities, both inside and outside the government, can access and use government information and data.
- **Making It Easier for Americans with Disabilities to Get Protection Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued final regulations to implement the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA). The regulations are designed to simplify the determination of who has a “disability” under the ADA and make it easier for people to establish that they are protected by the ADA. These regulations further solidify the purpose of the ADAAA, which was passed by Congress to supersede several Supreme Court decisions that interpreted the definition of “disability” in the ADA narrowly, and had resulted in a denial of protection for many individuals with disabilities such as cancer, diabetes or epilepsy.
 - **Making Government More Responsive to and Inclusive of the Disability Community:** The Obama Administration has made government more responsive to and inclusive of the needs of the disability community.
 - **Providing Inclusion and Representation in the Federal Government:** The President and his Administration created three new senior level disability positions and offices: The Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the State Department (FEMA), The Office of Disability Integration, and Coordination at the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and The Senior Advisor for Accessible Transportation at the Department of Transportation.
 - **Updating Building Standards for State and Local Government Facilities:** The Department of Justice issued revised Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, which had not been updated in nearly 20 years, setting new standards for construction and modernization of more than 80,000 public facilities of state and local governments.
 - **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** At the President’s direction, the United States signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which promotes equality and seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities, including our wounded warriors, enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all people.
 - **Supporting Community Living:** President Obama launched the “Year of Community Living” in 2009, and the Administration has continued to identify ways to improve access to housing, community supports, and independent living arrangements. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded nearly \$33 million to fund rental assistance vouchers for over 4,000 Americans with disabilities through its Rental Assistance for Non-Elderly Persons with Disabilities Program. Working collaboratively, the Departments of Justice, HUD, and Health and Human Services increased enforcement

of the landmark Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision so that people with disabilities can live in the communities where they choose.