

Proclamation by The President

National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 2006

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By The President of the United States of America

A PROCLAMATION

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we pay tribute to the accomplishments of the men and women with disabilities whose work helps keep America's economy strong, and we underscore our commitment to ensuring equal employment opportunity for all of our citizens.

Our country has made great progress to ensure that opportunities are accessible to everyone who is willing and able to work. Access to jobs was significantly expanded in 1990 when President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. This important legislation has served as a foundation for strengthening our Nation's workforce and advancing innovation and American leadership in a global marketplace.

In 2001, my Administration announced the New Freedom Initiative to build on the progress of the ADA and more fully integrate men and women with disabilities into all aspects of life. The New Freedom Initiative has helped expand access to technology, training, and education for citizens with disabilities. As a result, those who have a disability and seek employment are better able to compete for jobs. To assist in providing additional access to employment opportunities, we have also implemented the "Ticket to Work" program and strengthened training and employment services at One-Stop Career Centers. By visiting <http://www.DisabilityInfo.gov>, individuals and employers can learn more about the Federal Government's disability-related programs and receive information and resources they need to help achieve their personal and professional ambitions.

To recognize the contributions of Americans with disabilities and to encourage all citizens to ensure equal opportunity in the workforce, the Congress, by joint resolution approved as amended (36 U.S.C. 121), has designated October of each year as "National Disability Employment Awareness Month."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

GEORGE W. BUSH

SOCIAL SECURITY'S PASS PROGRAM CAN HELP FUND

For more employment news issues, see:
<http://www.aapd.com/News/empissues/indexempissues.php>

RETURN TO WORK

The Social Security Administration Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) is an important work incentive for motivated Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and Social Security Disability (SSDI) beneficiaries. The purpose of a PASS is to help fund education, training or other items to reach a specific job goal chosen by the disabled individual. The outcome of a PASS is for the individual to obtain a job that will reduce or eliminate dependence on disability payments.

To qualify for this program, a person should select a work goal that is feasible for himself/herself given the nature of the impairment, prior work history and training. The individual then contacts the local Social Security Office for a PASS form (SSA-545-BK). The application states the job goal, the steps needed to reach the job goal, and the expenses needed to reach the job goal. Allowable expenses are expenses necessary to achieve the work goal and must be of reasonable cost. There are many people who can help with the application – vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, organizations that help people with disabilities, the local Social Security Office or anyone else willing to help. The completed application should be mailed or brought into the local Social Security Office.

The local Social Security Office will forward the application to a special cadre of employees who are trained to work with PASS. The PASS Specialists will then work directly with the applicant to make any changes or obtain supporting evidence, as needed.

The PASS Specialists also provide training about PASS to organizations that help people who have disabilities. They are available to visit with groups to explain in detail how PASS works, how to complete the application, and what evidence is needed to support the application. The PASS Specialists servicing all of New England are located in Boston, Massachusetts. You can reach them at 1-800-297-4291 for further questions or to schedule a visit.

Shrinking Group of Government Workers with Disabilities

The number of federal employees with disabilities has notably decreased in the past decade, according to statistics from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported in the *Washington Post*. People with a disability make up less than one percent of the government work force, a 16 percent drop from 1996. The steady decline occurred as overall civilian federal employment rose by three percent, to 2.6 million workers.

The reason for the downward slide? Nobody knows. According to the *Washington Post*, some experts theorize that workers are finding better opportunities in the private sector thanks to changing attitudes and increased access to assistive technology. This is a very optimistic theory considering less than one-third of the disability community is employed, and a good chunk of this group is underemployed.

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DisabilityInfo.gov <webmaster@disabilityinfo.gov>

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President Bush Proclaimed October 2006 National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

“NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2006 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. I call upon Government officials, labor leaders, employers, and the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities”.

EEOC Moves to Stem Decline in Disabled Workforce

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission plans to sponsor educational events and seminars aimed at reversing the steady decline in the number of federal employees with severe disabilities. The agency launched a special section on its website

(<http://www.eeoc.gov/initiatives/lead>), where announcements and information on federal hiring of the disabled will be posted. The initiative -- Leadership for the Employment of Americans With Disabilities, or LEAD -- will be headed by EEOC Commissioner Christine M. Griffin. ...

People with severe disabilities have dropped to less than 1 percent of the full-time federal workforce, according to data released by the EEOC in June. About 10 percent of U.S. residents have a severe disability, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. ...

The EEOC said LEAD will try to increase awareness among federal hiring officials about the drop-off in employment of the disabled and educate agencies on how to use special rules to bring the disabled on board. LEAD also will seek to educate job applicants with severe disabilities on how to apply under the special rules. Focus groups will be set up with federal hiring officials, managers and experts to explore the issue of declining employment of the disabled, the EEOC said.

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act banned discrimination against people with disabilities in federal hiring and required agencies to develop affirmative-action plans to hire and promote more people with disabilities. [The Washington Post Company, Stephen Barr, October 6, 2006]