

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act
September 26, 2023

Every American, especially those with disabilities, is worthy of dignity and our respect and should have access to every opportunity available in our country. Fifty years ago, our Nation took a critical step toward realizing that promise with the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act. This landmark legislation is one of the most consequential civil rights laws in our history. It is responsible for banning discrimination on the basis of disability by federally funded entities through section 504 of the law, and it paved the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a Senator, I was proud to cosponsor this legislation as one of my earliest acts in office.

Since then, I've remained steadfastly committed to ensuring that the one in four Americans who live with disabilities have a fair shot at achieving the American dream. I've signed an Executive order advancing opportunities for people with disabilities in the Federal workforce, and my administration continues to help State and local governments, employers, and nonprofits tap Federal funds to hire more Americans with disabilities. However, we have more work to do to build on the Rehabilitation Act's foundation. Disabled Americans are still three times less likely to have a job, and they often earn less for doing the same work. Voting locations, transit, and public spaces are too often inaccessible. This is wrong, and it's why my administration is committed to equal access for all.

On the 50th anniversary of this legislation, we owe a debt of gratitude to the tireless advocacy of many people with disabilities and others for the passage of this law and the others that followed. My administration will continue our efforts to break down barriers for all those who face discrimination.

Categories: Statements by the President : Rehabilitation Act, 50th anniversary.

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