

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Remarks on Celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Pride Month**

*September 9, 2024*

*The President.* Well, thank you, Mayor Neil McDevitt. Neil is, as he said, from North Wales borough outside of Philly, almost in heaven, heading towards Scranton. [*Laughter*]

Neil is the first deaf person ever elected mayor in the history of our Nation. You're also a proud alum of one of the Nation's great universities, and I've spoken there several times: Gallaudet University here in Washington, DC—that's real—the first university in the world—in the world—exclusively for the deaf and hard-of-hearing persons. Its charter was signed 160 years ago in the middle of the Civil War by President Abraham Lincoln, who said everyone deserves, and I quote, "a fair chance in the race of life"—"a fair chance in the race of life."

Folks, that's the idea. That's why we're here today. And a special thanks to the current and former Members of Congress here today, who are some of the most important champions of disability rights in America and American history and around the world.

The first person I'd like to recognize is my buddy, Tammy Duckworth. Tammy—Tammy not only has a heart as big as her head, but, God love her, she's a genuine, genuine war hero. You're incredible, Tammy. You're incredible.

And my good friend—and he is a good friend; he won't acknowledge it, but he knows—I like him—I love him too—Steny Hoyer. Steny represents the western shore of Delaware. [*Laughter*] I kid him all the time.

Former Representative Tony Coelho. Tony—I was bragging about Tony today. It's been a long time we've known each other. And they were asking—my younger staff was asking about him, and—and when he walked up and gave me a hug, they said, "God, he does know him." [*Laughter*] See you in Rehoboth, Tony.

And, Jim—where are you, Jim?—Jim Langerman [*Langevin*; White House correction]. Jimmy, thank you, pal. A man who not only overcame a disability, but has had a profound impact on the House of Representatives. And Congressman Steve Cohen—Steve, good to see you, pal. And Mark Desaulnier—Mark, where are you? There you go, Mark. Good to see you, buddy.

And a big thanks to the hundreds of advocates who work every day to ensure people with disabilities can live and thrive in their communities, not just live, but thrive.

One of my first acts as a United States Senator was cosponsoring the Rehabilitation Act, one of the most consequential civil rights laws in our Nation's history, which banned discrimination on the basis of disability. And by—and you know, any—no disability could be not looked at without any—in any program that was funded by the Federal Government.

It promoted equal access to communities, authorized independent living services, and so much more. The Rehabilitation [*Act*; White House correction] also laid out—laid the groundwork for the landmark law we celebrate here today: the Americans with Disability Act.

Steny and Tony, they led the charge in the House of Representatives—I mean that sincerely—led the charge, along with Major Owens. And Tom Harkin and Bob Dole led it in the Senate.

I was a kid, but I was proud to be a cosponsor in the Senate. Right here on this lawn, 34 years ago, President George H.W. Bush signed it into law, proving we can work together in a

bipartisan fashion to ensure the American Dream is available to all of us, not just some of us. We've got to get back to those days.

Today, more than three decades after the ADA's passage, many of us can still recall an America where a person with disabilities could be denied service in a restaurant or a grocery store, where an employer could refuse to interview or hire you because of a disability. But for more than 61 million Americans living with disabilities, these laws are a source of opportunity, respect, and pride and dignity now—dignity.

My dad used to say that's the single most important thing people should be—deserve: to be treated with dignity.

But, of course, these laws did not bring an end to the work we need to do. That's why Kamala and I have been so determined to move our Nation forward for Americans living with disabilities.

We're transforming the way the economy works for all Americans. For example, people with disabilities are working more than they ever did before. In our short term—my short term, our short term—it's going to be a long term for Kamala, I hope—[*applause*]*—*in our—a record 16 million jobs were created. But of those 16 million, 2.2 million jobs were with people with disabilities, the highest unemployment rate in—on record.

Wages are up. In fact, the median household income for disabled Americans is up \$10,000 since Kamala and I came into office. The Labor Department is protecting workers with disabilities and fighting to end unjust employment practices.

We're also helping State and local governments and businesses and nonprofits access Federal funds to hire more disabled Americans—access Federal to hire more disabled Americans.

And we're going to continue to make sure this administration looks like America, appointing people with disabilities to positions in our—throughout our Government—throughout this Government.

You know, with your partnership, we're improving access to health care and home care. Before, some doctors and hospitals actually—actually—were denying medical treatment related to organ donations and lifesaving care for disabled Americans based simply on their disability alone.

*[At this point, the President put on his sunglasses.]*

Sorry, the sun is shining. [*Laughter*]

That's why the Department of Health and Human Service issued a—issued a rule barring those kinds of denials of medical treatment, because no American—I say, no American—should be deprived of health care that they need.

We're also continuing Long COVID clinical trials. And our new agency, ARPA-H, is driving breakthroughs on biomedicine to prevent, detect, and treat diseases including cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and other neurological diseases like MS and Alzheimer's [*ALS; White House correction*].

Look, folks, our American Rescue Plan provided \$37 billion—\$37 billion—for all of the States to expand home care and community-based services—by the way, I need not tell this audience it really matters; it really matters—under Medicare [*Medicaid; White House correction*] so people with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, can live independently at home. Not only best for them, but best for the economy.

And in the decade since the ADA, we're fighting Big Pharma to give Medicare the power to negotiate prescription drug prices for seniors and people with disabilities finally—finally, finally. And thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, we finally beat Big Pharma.

Steny and I were fighting them back when we were young Members of the Congress. Well, guess what? We finally beat them.

We've capped the cost of insulin for seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare who have diabetes at \$35 a month instead of up to \$400 a month.

And starting this January, the total out-of-pocket prescription cost anyone will have to pay that falls in those categories is \$2,000 a year. People with disabilities on Medicare, even expensive drugs like cancers that cost \$10-, \$12-, \$14 [thousand; White House correction] a year, will not have to pay more than \$2,000 a year for everything—every single drug.

And, part of that deal, we also negotiated lower costs for the 10 most expensive prescription drugs that treat everything from heart disease to arthritis, which goes in effect in January. And, from that point on, every year, 10 new drugs will be negotiated going forward every single year.

And by the time—our reforms not only save seniors and people with disabilities money; they save the taxpayers \$160 billion—\$160 billion—just for the first passing, because Medicare no longer has to pay those exorbitant prices to Big Pharma. And that is only—the savings for American taxpayers is only going to go up.

Kamala and I wanted you to know that we want the—we have the—if we want the best economy in the world, we need the best caregiving economy in the world. [*Applause*] I mean it. That's why I took historic executive action to expand access to high-quality care and provide support for care workers. And for our Nation's 50 million—53 million family caregivers, they'll now receive support.

By the way, and to make public transit in our country accessible to everyone, our bipartisan infrastructure law invests \$6.75 billion, making the biggest invest ever—biggest investment ever in transportation accessibility, adding more wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms—more airport, rail stations, and other transit locations.

And the Justice Department established standards for State and local governments to make websites and mobile apps more accessible so people with disabilities can travel from work to school—work to school, making learning more accessible, and being able to vote.

And something Kamala and I are really proud of: We celebrate disability pride—pride. That's what all of you embody. I really mean it, from the bottom of heart, that you embody it. That's what we've witnessed in the past 2 weeks when we've seen—watching Team U.S.A. compete in the Paralympics in Paris.

Weren't they incredible? I mean it, really. Absolutely mind-blowing.

And thank you all from the bottom of my heart for showing you—what to do to ensure that the promise of America is delivered to all Americans so that everyone—and I mean this truly—everyone has "a fair chance in the race of life." That's all we're asking for: Everyone has a fair chance in the race of life.

We just have to remember who in the hell we are. I mean this sincerely. We're the United States of America. And there is nothing—I mean this sincerely—there is nothing beyond our capacity when we set our mind to it and do it together. And let's get everything moving faster.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

I'm so proud to be with you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Thomas R. Harkin; and Vice President Kamala D. Harris, in her capacity as the 2024 Democratic Presidential nominee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 10.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Pride Month celebration.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Coelho, Anthony L.; Cohen, Stephen I.; DeSaulnier, Mark J.; Duckworth, L. Tammy; Harkin, Thomas R.; Harris, Kamala D.; Hoyer, Steny H.; Langevin, James R.; McDevitt, Neil.

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