notes under sections 12111, 12131, 12141, 12161, and 12181 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990’.

Findings and Purposes of Pub. L. 100–574
Pub. L. 100–574, §1, Oct. 28, 1988, 102 Stat. 2559–2560, provided that—

(1) Findings.—Congress finds that—

(1) in enacting the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) [42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.], Congress intended that the Act provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provide broad coverage;

(2) in enacting the ADA, Congress recognized that physical and mental disabilities in no way diminish a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of society, but that people with physical or mental disabilities are frequently precluded from doing so because of the attitudes of others toward the failure to remove societal and institutional barriers;

(3) while Congress expected that the definition of disability under the ADA would be interpreted consistently with how courts had applied the definition of a handicapped individual under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [29 U.S.C. 701 et seq.], that expectation has not been fulfilled;

(4) the holdings of the Supreme Court in Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc., 527 U.S. 471 (1999) and its companion cases have narrowed the broad scope of protection intended to be afforded by the ADA, thus eliminating protection for many individuals whom Congress intended to protect;

(5) the holding of the Supreme Court in Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams, 534 U.S. 184 (2002) further narrowed the broad scope of protection intended to be afforded by the ADA;

(6) as a result of these Supreme Court cases, lower courts have incorrectly found in individual cases that people with a range of substantially limiting impairments are not people with disabilities;

(7) in particular, the Supreme Court, in the case of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams, 534 U.S. 184 (2002), interpreted the term ‘substantially limits’ to require a greater degree of limitation than was intended by Congress; and

(8) Congress finds that the current Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ADA regulations defining the term ‘substantially limits’ as ‘significantly restricted’ are inconsistent with congressional intent, by expressing too high a standard.

(2) Purposes.—The purposes of this Act [see Short Title of 2008 Amendment note above] are—

(1) to carry out the ADA’s objectives of providing ‘a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination’ and ‘clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination’ by reinstating a broad scope of protection to be available under the ADA;

(2) to reject the requirement enunciated by the Supreme Court in Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc., 527 U.S. 471 (1999) and its companion cases that an impairment substantially limits a major life activity is to be determined with reference to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures;

(3) to reject the Supreme Court’s reasoning in Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc., 527 U.S. 471 (1999) with regard to coverage under the third prong of the definition of disability and to reinstate the reasoning of the Supreme Court in School Board of Nassau County v. Arline, 480 U.S. 273 (1987) which set forth a broad view of the third prong of the definition of handicap under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;

(4) to reject the standards enunciated by the Supreme Court in Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams, 534 U.S. 184 (2002), that the terms ‘substantially’ and ‘major’ in the definition of disability under the ADA ‘need to be interpreted strictly to create a demanding standard for qualifying as disabled,’ and that to be substantially limited in performing a major life activity under the ADA ‘an individual must have an impairment that prevents or severely restricts the individual from doing activities that are of central importance to most people’s daily lives’;

(5) to convey congressional intent that the standards created by the Supreme Court in the case of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams, 534 U.S. 184 (2002) for ‘substantially limited,’ and applied by lower courts in numerous decisions, has created an inappropriately high level of limitation necessary to obtain coverage under the ADA, to convey that it is the intent of Congress that the primary object of attention in cases brought under the ADA should be whether entities covered under the ADA have complied with their obligations, and to convey that the question of whether an individual’s impairment is a disability under the ADA should not demand extensive analysis; and

(6) to express Congress’ expectation that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will revise that portion of its current regulations that defines the term ‘substantially limits’ as ‘significantly restricted’ to be consistent with this Act, including the amendments made by this Act.

Study by General Accounting Office of Existing Disability-Related Employment Incentives
Pub. L. 106–170, title III, §330(a), Dec. 17, 1999, 113 Stat. 160, provided that, as soon as practicable after Dec. 17, 1999, the Comptroller General was to undertake a study to assess existing tax credits and other disability-related employment incentives under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) and other Federal laws, specifically addressing the extent to which such credits and other incentives would encourage employers to hire and retain individuals with disabilities; and that, not later than 3 years after Dec. 17, 1999, the Comptroller General was to transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a written report presenting the results of the study and any appropriate recommendations for legislative or administrative changes.

§12102. Definition of disability
As used in this chapter:

(1) Disability

The term ‘disability’ means, with respect to an individual—

(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;

(B) a record of such an impairment; or

(C) being regarded as having such an impairment (as described in paragraph (3)).

(2) Major life activities

(A) In general

For purposes of paragraph (1), major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

(B) Major bodily functions

For purposes of paragraph (1), a major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.
§ 12103. Additional definitions

As used in this chapter:

(1) Auxiliary aids and services

The term “auxiliary aids and services” includes—
(A) qualified interpreters or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments;
(B) qualified readers, taped texts, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments;
(C) acquisition or modification of equipment or devices; and
(D) other similar services and actions.

(2) State

The term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands of the United States, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.


REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in text, was in the original “this Act”, meaning Pub. L. 101–336, July 26, 1990, 104 Stat. 327, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 12101 of this title and Tables.


AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110–325 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section consisted of pars. (1) to (3) defining purposes of this chapter—“auxiliary aids and services”, “disability”, and “State”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT


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EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Jan. 1, 2009, see section 8 of Pub. L. 110–325, set out as an Effective Date of 2008 Amendment note under section 705 of Title 29, Labor.

TERMINATION OF TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

For termination of Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, see note set out preceding section 1681 of Title 48, Territories and Insular Possessions.