

DISABILITIES

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



PRESIDENT'S
COMMITTEE
ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES

June 15, 1999

Vice President Albert Gore, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Gore:

It is my pleasure to share with you a copy of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' 1999 Educational Kit. The theme for this year's program, "Think Ability," conveys a simple yet critical message: Attitude is the key to raising the level of employment for people with disabilities. As we round the last lap toward the next century, hurdling attitudinal barriers remains our greatest challenge. The kit enhances the information available to the public regarding job accommodations, attitudinal barriers, the job interview process, and the employment of persons with disabilities.

The kit will serve as a technical assistance tool to aid employers with incorporating persons with disabilities into the diversified workforce of this nation. A vital part of the President's and your agenda for this country is to encourage economic growth, and produce more and better jobs. The educational activities generated during the Anniversary of ADA (July 26), National Disability Employment Awareness month (October) and throughout the year will do much to open doors for the employment of the most underutilized of America's workforce -- people with disabilities.

By breaking down attitudinal barriers and opening doors to ability, our government and private sector employers will gain the skills and talents of 54 million Americans with disabilities. Americans with disabilities are ready to move through the doors and make significant contributions to society. Working together we will make it happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Coelho".

Tony Coelho
Chairman

Enclosure

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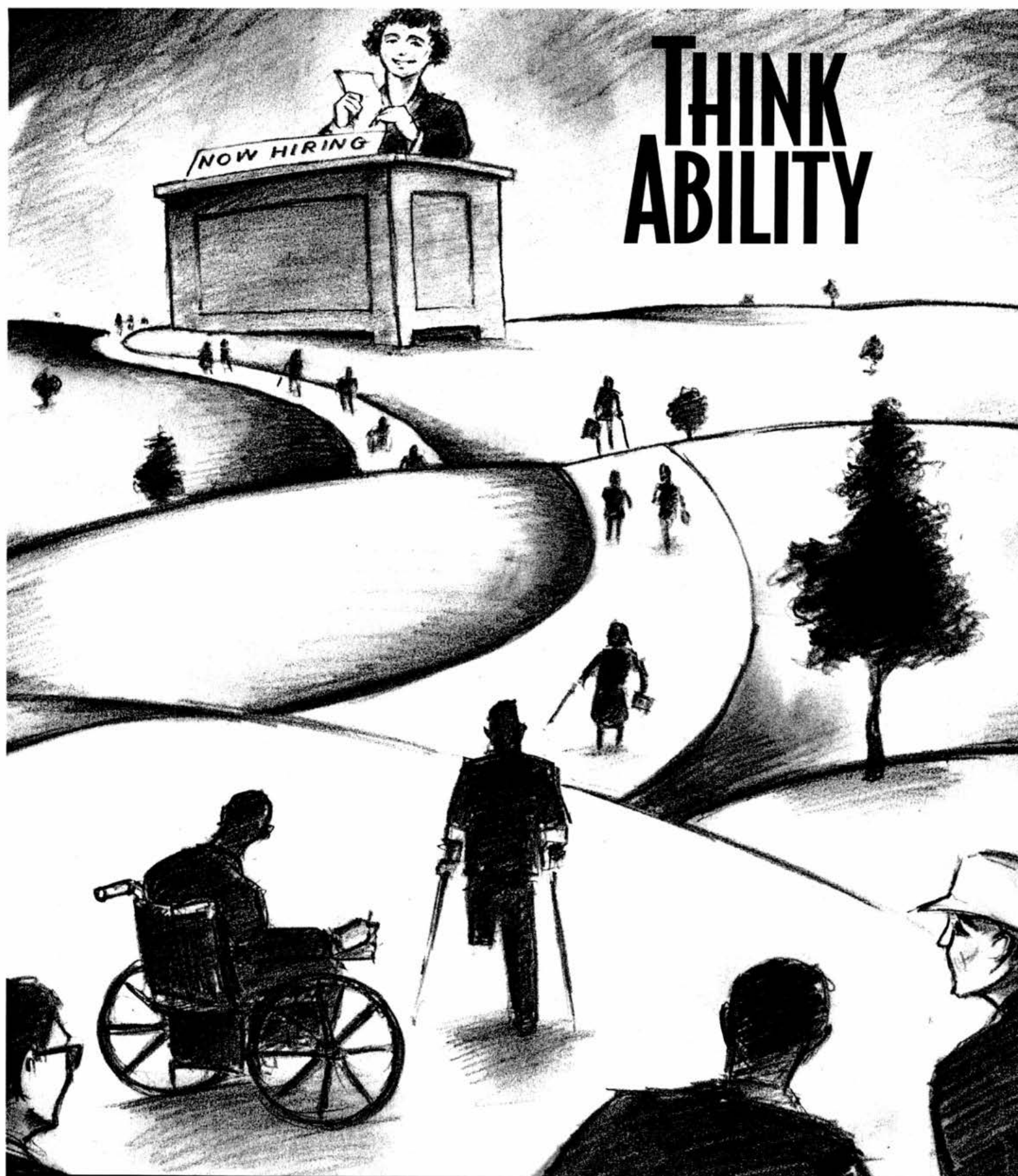
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THINK ABILITY



PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
EDUCATIONAL KIT 1999

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release
Friday, February 12, 1999

Contact:
(202) 456-7035

**VICE PRESIDENT GORE UNVEILS NEW REGULATION
TO ENABLE MORE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES RETURN TO WORK**

Announcement Part of Broader Administrative Initiative

Washington, DC -- Vice President Gore unveiled today a new regulation to remove some important barriers to work for people with disabilities.

"People with disabilities can bring tremendous energy and talent to the American workforce, but there are many barriers that often limit their ability to work, including the fact that they may lose their disability benefits," Vice President Gore said. "Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking important steps to prevent people with disabilities of choosing between critical protections and work."

Under current rules to become eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, an individual must be unable to engage in any substantial gainful activity (SGA) that exceeds \$500 per month. SGA is also used as a measure in determining ongoing entitlement for SSDI benefits and those who exceed this amount lose their disability benefits and health insurance. Each year, approximately 400,000 disability beneficiaries participate in the workforce. Many hesitate to work because they cannot afford to give up critical benefits. The unemployment rate among all working-age adults with disabilities is nearly 75 percent.

The new regulation increases the amount of income Americans with disabilities receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), can earn -- from \$500 to \$700 per month -- and still receive critical cash and medical benefits. This initiative costs \$1.2 billion over five years.

Today's announcement builds on the Administration's proposed comprehensive initiative to improve economic opportunities for Americans with disabilities, including:

- * **Including the Work Incentives Improvement Act in the President's budget.** Health care -- particularly prescription drugs and personal assistance -- is essential for people with disabilities to work. The Administration's FY2000 budget which includes the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which was recently introduced by Senators Moynahan, Roth, Jeffords, and Kennedy. This proposal, which costs \$1.2 billion over 5 years, would:
 - Improve access to health care by: (1) Expanding States' ability to provide a Medicaid buy-in to people with disabilities who return to work whose assets and/or income exceed current limits; (2) giving states the option of offering the buy-in to people who do not meet the current disability standard, but who can work only because of medical

treatment or for those with a specific physical or mental impairment that is not yet severe enough to qualify for health care assistance, but that is reasonably expected to lead to a severe disability in the absence of medical treatment; and (3) extending Medicare coverage for people with disabilities who return to work.

- Modernize the employment services system by creating a "ticket" that will enable SSI or SSDI beneficiaries to go to any of a number of public or private providers for vocational rehabilitation. If the beneficiary goes to work and achieves substantial earnings, providers would be paid a portion of the benefits saved.
- Create a Work Incentive Grant program to provide benefits planning and assistance, facilitate access to information about work incentives, and better integrate services to people with disabilities working or returning to work.

- * **Providing a \$1,000 tax credit for work-related expenses for people with disabilities.** The daily costs of getting to and from work, and being effective at work, can be high if not prohibitive for people with disabilities. Under this new proposal, workers with significant disabilities would receive an annual \$1,000 tax credit to help cover the formal and informal costs that are associated with employment, such as special transportation and technology. This tax credit, which will assist 200,000 to 300,000 Americans, will help ensure that people with disabilities have the tools they need to return to work. The credit will cost \$700 million over 5 years.

- * **Improving access to assistive technology.** This new initiative would accelerate the development and adoption of information and communications technologies that can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and enhance their ability to participate in the workplace. The initiative would: (1) help make the Federal government a "model user" of assistive technology; (2) support new and expanded state loan programs to make assistive technology more affordable for Americans with disabilities; and (3) invest in research and development and technology transfer for people with disabilities. It would cost \$35 million in FY 2000, more than double the government's current investment in deploying assistive technology.

- * **Taking action on all of the Task Force Recommendations.** In December, the Vice President accepted the report of the President's Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities, took action on some of their recommendations, and pledged that the Administration would review others in the budget process. All of the proposals stated above, in addition to the SGA increase are part of the Task Force recommendations.

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