

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
BY SATELLITE
TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CONFERENCE
IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN
MAY 23, 1996

Thank you, all of you who are there for your very warm welcome. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person today, I have to be in Milwaukee with the German Chancellor. But I didn't want to miss this opportunity to talk with you about what we must do together to ensure the full participation of the 49 million Americans with disabilities in the vibrant life and economy of our great country.

Three and a half years ago, when I took the oath of office, I had a very clear vision of what I hoped our country could be like as we move into the 21st century. I wanted us to be a country that offers great opportunities to all who are willing to work for them. I wanted us to remain the world's strongest force for peace and freedom. And I wanted us to rebuild our sense of unity and community around the shared ethic of responsibility and a respect for diversity.

Together we've made great progress toward achieving those goals. Our economic strategy to reduce the deficit, expand trade and invest in our people is paying off. The deficit is now less than half of what it was four years ago; we have 8.5 million more jobs, the lowest combined rates of inflation, mortgage rates and employment in 27 years. Homeownership is at a 15-year high, and we have all-time highs in exports and new business formations for each of the last three years.

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In 1992 I issued a challenge to our nation. I said we must not rest until America has a national disability policy based on three simple creeds: inclusion, not exclusion; independence, not dependence; and empowerment, not paternalism. I remain committed to that vision, and I want to thank all of you for working so hard with us to make it a reality. More than ever before in our history, America's greatness in the next century will depend upon the ability of all our citizens to make the most of their own lives. Americans with disabilities are an enormous, largely untapped reservoir of that potential.

Employment is the key to economic security for Americans, including people with disabilities. Even though we have created 8.5 million new jobs, it remains a tragedy today that two-thirds of the people with disabilities are unemployed. And it's up to all of us -- employers, labor, people with disabilities, and government -- to work together to change this picture.

In the past four years, we have made progress. We're fighting to make sure that people with disabilities have health care and the living wages they need to live independently. Our strong commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act has opened up town halls, schools, transportation systems, workplaces, groceries, restaurants, and movie theaters to millions of people with disabilities. Our 1997 budget calls for an increase in funding for ADA enforcement at the Department of Justice.

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Caral 7/16
This is now
yours!

We made a
copy for
our files!

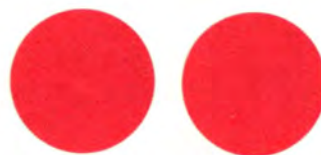
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Thank you very much, Tony, for your remarks, your support, your friendship and your leadership of the committee. I want to say hello to the others who are there -- to John Sweeney and to Al Checchi. I want to say a special word of thanks to my good friend, Justin Dart who I know had to leave, but who has been a real champion for Americans with disabilities; indeed, for the rights and interests of all Americans.

I want to say a special word of greeting to the co-chairs of the committee, the vice chairs -- Norm Miller, I. King Jordan, Karen Meyer, Neil Jacobson, Dr. Sylvia Walker, and Ron Drach.

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Just last week I had a very moving visit with Christopher Reeve in the Oval Office, and I mentioned to Christopher that in 1933 the Oval Office was the first government office designed specifically to be accessible to accommodate President Roosevelt. He said to me that it was too bad that at the time he had to hide his disability.

I hope with Christopher Reeve that as the Roosevelt Memorial becomes a reality, with your efforts to remove the stigma of disability, they'll find a way to make sure that the American people know that this great, great President was great with his disability.

Thank you all, and God bless you.