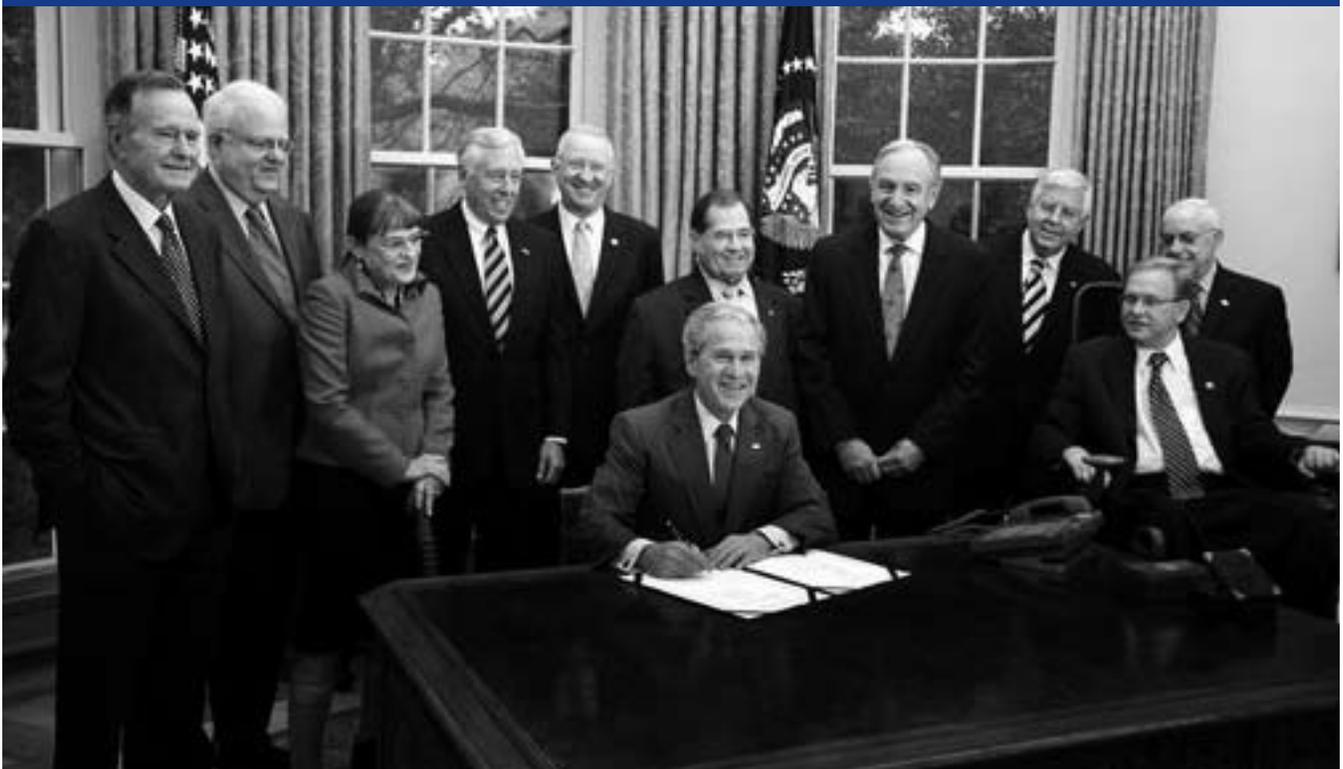


the Independent

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Fall 2008

ADA Amendments Act Signed into Law!



President George W. Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act Thursday, Sept. 25, 2008, in the Oval Office of the White House. Joining him for the signing of the law that amends the ADA Act of 1990, are, from left: Former President George H.W. Bush, Republican Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin and his spouse, Cheryl Sensenbrenner; Democratic Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland; Republican Rep. Buck McKeon of California; Democratic Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York; Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa); Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.); Democratic Rep. Jim Langevin of Rhode Island, and U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey. White House photo by Joyce N. Boghosian

Voter Guide 2008

What's Inside

- What's Wrong with this Picture
- Why I Vote, and You Should Too
- From Where I Sit
- Introduction to Voting Guide
- Tips for Voting

What's Wrong with this Picture?

From US Census Bureau statistics, 2000:

There were an estimated 612,027 voting-aged persons with disabilities state of Minnesota at that time, 336,615 of whom were estimated to have voted. This amounts to 55%. Total voter turnout for Minnesota during the 2000 election was 67.8%

There were an estimated 88,842 voting-aged persons with disabilities in the state of North Dakota at that time, 42,911 of whom were estimated to have voted. This amounts to 48.3%. Total voter turnout for North Dakota during the 2000 election was 69.8%.

Perhaps politicians don't pay as much attention to disability issues, because people with disabilities vote at far lower rates than other population groups.



Why I Vote, and You Should Too

By Cyndi Collins

I think how lucky I am to have the opportunity to cast a vote. Women have only been able to vote for the past 88 years. But realizing what a privilege it is to vote never occurred to me until this past year. My first two elections, I didn't spend much time getting informed as to who was running for local, state, or federal office. I either picked who my parents were voting for or picked whoever's ad I liked the best on TV. These probably were not the best tactics. Now, I see voting as a time to create positive change for society. This is only the third major election I get to vote in, and what an exciting time to vote. In comparison to when women were first able to vote in 1920, the country was suffering from the aftermath of World War I. The wartime boom collapsed and a recession had already started. Not too different from today. Policies

affect each of us differently, and whomever you choose to vote for is your choice. Ask yourself what's important and what type of positive changes you want to see happen at any level of office and remember to be proud to cast your vote. ■



Billy Altom, Executive Director of the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living delivers the keynote at Celebrate in 2008, Freedom Resource Center's annual celebration and annual meeting. This meeting was attended by over 150 persons.

From Where I Sit

By Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director

On September 25, President Bush signed the ADA Amendments Act. This bill has been one of the main focuses of the disability rights movement for several years. It was originally called the ADA Restoration Act, but was later changed to reflect the compromise agreement that was made between disability organizations and the business community. It reflects years of work by advocates all across the country. As a matter of fact, many of us were not optimistic that this day would come anytime soon. This reminds me of one of my heroes in the disability movement, Justin Dart. Up until his death in June of 2002, he was a tireless advocate and respected leader for our cause. Reading about his work often gives me inspiration to continue what I'm doing here at Freedom Resource Center. The following is a part of the obituary written by two of Dart's close colleagues.

By Fred Fay and Fred Pelka,
written at Justin Dart's request.

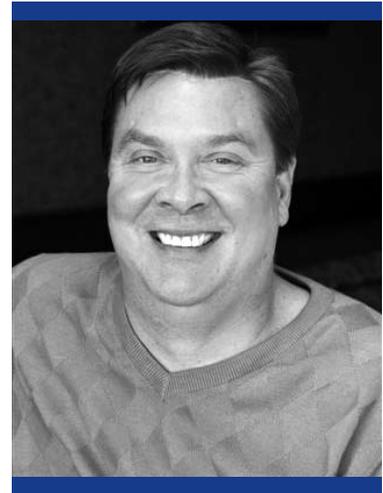
Dart is best known for his work in passing the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 1988, he was appointed, along with parents' advocate Elizabeth Boggs, to chair the Congressional Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities. The Dart's (Justin and his wife Yoshiko) again toured the country at their own expense, visiting every state, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the District of Columbia, holding public forums attended by more than 30,000 people. Everywhere he went, Dart

touted the ADA as "the civil rights act of the future." The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990, an anniversary that is celebrated each year by "disability pride" events all across the country.

In 1996, The Dart's yet again undertook a whirlwind tour of the country, telling people to "get into politics as if your life depended on it. It does."

Dart suffered a series of heart attacks in late 1997, which curtailed his ability to travel. He continued, however, to lobby for the rights of people with disabilities, and attended numerous events, rallies, demonstrations and public hearings. Toward the end of his life, Dart was hard at work on a political manifesto that would outline his vision of "the revolution of empowerment." In its conclusion, he urged his "Beloved colleagues in struggle, listen to the heart of this old soldier. Our lives, our children's lives, the quality of the lives of billions in future generations hangs in the balance. I cry out to you from the depths of my being. Humanity needs you! Lead! Lead! Lead the revolution of empowerment!"

In enacting the ADA Amendments Act, Congress is attempting to reverse Supreme Court decisions that have narrowly restricted the definition of who is covered under the ADA. It amends the definition of disability to include those who Congress originally intended to protect from discrimination, and it prevents the courts from considering "mitigating measures" when deciding whether an individual qualifies for protection under the law. Hopefully this law and its accompanying regulations will help people with disabilities, as well as employers. Perhaps this



Nate Aalgaard,
executive director

is just one more way that we can eventually get to a society where everyone has equal opportunity. It is definitely worth celebrating. ■

2008 Advocate of the Year



Fargo-Moorhead
Community Theater

Introduction to Voting Guide 2008

By Scott Burlingame,
Assistant Program Director

In an effort to provide our readers with the most accurate information possible, we have put to together the following voting guide for the election on November 4th. All candidates for U.S. Congress from our service area, and the candidates for governor in North Dakota were sent questionnaires by Freedom Resource Center, and we were extremely excited to have the questionnaires returned from Congressman Earl Pomeroy, Governor John Hoeven, Senator Tim Mathern, as well as Al Franken

The candidates were asked questions about their plans for addressing the challenge to provide long term care to a growing aging population, how they would work to reduce employment barriers and improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities, what they

would do to expand access to affordable, accessible transposition for people with disabilities in rural areas, and how they would work to change our world for people with disabilities. All candidates for office were contacted several times, and those returned answers will be included in this publication. In addition, you will see summaries of the campaign positions for the candidates who are opposing the above listed candidates, but whom did not respond to our multiple requests for information. I have also included a summary of positions for Presidential candidates Senator John McCain and Senator Barack Obama.

In addition, I would strongly encourage you to visit the listed websites and find out the candidate's stance on other issues. For more information on local candidates for office, please visit Freedom's new Blog at www.areavoices.com/freedom.

Sen. John McCain

Senator John McCain was instrumental in crafting key sections of the landmark 1990 ADA legislation, prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in hiring and promotions, extending that same protection to disabled people employed by state and local governments and he supported the ADA Amendments Act.

Sen. McCain proposes designing a health care reimbursement system for taking care of the whole patient, whether it's a physical or mental health problem and he supports mental health parity.

Sen. McCain will work to advance federal research into autism, to promote early screening, to identify better treatment options, and to provide support for children with autism.

His education plan will focus federal resources on ensuring that the neediest children have access to a range of high quality programs and building Centers for Excellence in Head Start to lead to excellence in all of the pre-kindergarten and early learning programs that taxpayers support.

Sen. McCain will fight to save the future of Social Security. He believes that obligations to the retirees of today and the future can be achieved without raising taxes and he supports supplementing the current Social Security system with personal accounts.

Sources:

<http://www.olrs.ohio.gov/prescompare.htm>

www.johnmccain.com

Sen. Barack Obama

Barack Obama has posted a comprehensive plan for people with disabilities at www.barackobama.com/issues/disabilities. The summary of that plan is below.

First, Sen. Obama will provide Americans with disabilities with the educational opportunities they need to succeed. He vows to support full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Barack Obama has been a strong and consistent advocate for fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress promised to shoulder 40 percent of each state's "excess cost" of educating children with disabilities, but it has never lived up to this obligation. Currently, the federal government provides less than half of the promised funding (17 percent).

In addition, he vows to work to end discrimination and promote equal opportunity. Senator Obama plans on appointing Judges and Justices who respect laws designed to protect people with disabilities. He will work to increase the employment rate of workers with disabilities. Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe the federal government should serve as a model for other employers in hiring and accommodating employees with disabilities. Finally, he supports independent, community-based living for Americans with disabilities.

North Dakota Governor

Governor John Hoeven

One of our top goals is to fund our priorities like taking care of people, including healthcare and long term care needs. One of the issues we face is recruiting and retaining the workers to help provide that care, and we plan to continue working hard to create the incentives that will do just that. We support increasing loan repayments, tuition reimbursements and other incentives to recruit and retain nursing staff and making all levels of nursing credentials more convenient to obtain and more affordable for the student. We will also support an annual inflationary increase for Medicaid providers, including nursing facility and basic care facility providers to help those institutions serve the people of North Dakota, especially the elderly.

I would address these issues by providing strong financial support for developmental disability (DD) service providers and the DD workshops in North Dakota, as well as aggressive economic development efforts to create more jobs statewide.

I would expand transportation resources, including regional transit facilities in conjunction with local and county government.

Through education, out-reach, sound financial support, and creating more opportunity we can continue to enhance the standard of living and quality of life for persons with disabilities.

Senator Tim Mathern

A Mathern administration will provide additional home and community based care which will happen if care providers receive a just wage and the program is fully funded. We must fund long term care facilities at a level where they can provide excellent service.

I would grant tuition refunds for graduates of college and technical schools who stay in North Dakota to work. Without keeping these people there will be no one to provide services for an aging population.

Businesses that make facility changes shall receive a tax incentive to eliminate physical barriers and for hiring persons with disabilities. I would support creation of a Human Rights Commission/Office.

I would make each public transportation service available to all who need them. Many times there are more than one transportation service but each limited to one category of people. We need to develop systems available to more people by such a sharing system. Persons should also receive vouchers to help pay for transportation dependent on the specific needs of the individual.

I would do more to educate the general public about both the strengths and challenges for persons with disabilities. I would accelerate the development of community service agencies so institutional care would be a true last resort not a service needed because community services are available. I would appoint persons with disabilities to boards and commissions, not just boards that deal with disability issues.

2008 Youth Advocate of the Year



Tawnya Taylor

Information

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings please send your email address to freedom@freedomrc.org

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call 701-478-0459 or 1-800-450-0459.

Freedom Resource Center and/ or its Board of Directors do not necessarily endorse or support any of the views expressed within the personal testimonies contained in this newsletter, unless approval is specifically mentioned.

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Alternate formats available upon request.

Editorial Board: Nate Aalgaard, Scott Burlingame, Cyndi Collins, and Rikki Trageton

US Senate- Minnesota

Al Franken

I've talked to people with disabilities around the state – and spent a lot of time hearing about barriers to getting work. That experience has made me realize I'd like to put someone in my office in Washington to take care of constituent services specifically for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities deserve equal access to employment. Unfortunately, they often face additional obstacles of prejudice on top of the everyday struggles of finding a job. As a result, people with disabilities have an unemployment rate 20% higher than the general population. Much of this can be prevented with increased employer awareness. Prospective employers need to know about available resources and other low-cost accommodations. And I'd go a step further, making the cost of accommodations a deductible business expense.

It's also important that we work to implement a gradual phase-out of disability payments instead of the flawed formula of immediate cessation. This is critical to combat the negative incentive for working, and to provide a meaningful sliding scale of income support.

All Americans should have affordable, accessible, high-quality health care, just like folks in every other industrialized country. But these days, Americans with and without disabilities often find themselves fighting for access and means to quality care. It is not only unfair, it's tragic, that those with disabilities have to struggle for the right to be independent as well as the logistical capacity. In Washington, I'll work to create a

national system in which patients and their doctors control their care.

People with disabilities deserve to live where they are most comfortable. In most cases this means finding ways for them to stay in their own homes and in the communities where their friends and family are.

Strengthening home care options will also address the concerns of Minnesotans who struggle to find access to providers. Minnesotans with disabilities in rural areas are less likely to find nursing homes in their communities, and those that exist are struggling financially. Minnesotans with disabilities deserve to live where they choose - and most often that would be remaining at or close to home, with family and friends.

Access to transportation is vital to independent living, and can be the ticket to employment opportunities, political participation, and social interaction.

Senator Norm Coleman

(Taken from www.colemanforsenate.com)

Sen. Coleman has vowed to undertake the challenge of health care reform with a set of concrete principles. First, everyone should have access to affordable health care and once you are insured, you should not have to worry about losing it just because you get sick. Second, our health care system needs to do a better job of rewarding high-quality, low-cost care and educating consumers so they can make wise decisions with their health care dollars. This is why he introduced the National Health Literacy Act, which will expand consumer's ability to obtain and understand health care information and services.

The cost of long-term care places a serious financial strain on a growing number of American families. He believes we need to develop a more sustainable, private long-term care system that allows seniors to enjoy the dignity of independent living, but also provides a stable funding source for seniors in need of more intensive care.

He would allow individuals to establish tax-free savings accounts to pay long-term care insurance premiums and fund other long-term care needs. I would also continue to support Medicare and Medicaid programs and medical technologies that promote home and community-based treatments.

Sen. Coleman takes pride in his service to disabled Veterans. He authored a provision in the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Authorization bill to increase mental health care providers who accept military health insurance.

2008 Volunteer of the Year



Gin Mason

US House of Representatives North Dakota

Congressman Earl Pomeroy

In order to strengthen employment opportunities for people with disabilities, I voted for legislative that will restore anti-discrimination provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, reversing several Supreme Court rulings that had eroded these civil rights protections. I also support funding that would go toward cutting edge technologies to assist people with disabilities in the workplace. Furthermore, I believe that we need to ensure that transportation options are available to allow people with disabilities adequate access to workplaces.

As a member of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, I will continue to advocate for commonsense solutions to increase the access and affordability of health insurance. I have led the charge in Congress to remove inequities in the Medicare payment system that have unfairly disadvantaged rural providers for years so that folks in North Dakota have access to the services they need. In addition, I have introduced bipartisan legislation will create incentives for individuals to purchase that pays for long term care.

I support programs that provide the elderly and people with disabilities the choice to live independently if it is practical for their lives. Home health care services are also an important resource for people who choose to live in either a home or community based setting and I have also been advocate of Medicare funding for these services, including payment enhancements for providers who supply these services in rural areas.

In closing, I believe that people with disabilities deserve access to all of the care and support they need to fill active roles in the workplace and society. Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to these issues.

Duane Sand:

(Taken from www.duanesand.com)

Duane Sand is currently leading the fight to pass an Initiated Measure that will cut income taxes by 50% and small business taxes by 15%. Measure Two will be on the ballot in November. He has always been a strong fiscal conservative and will be the taxpayer's watchdog in Congress.

Duane Sand understands that costs are going up for everyone

in North Dakota, both on the farm and in town. That is why we need to Drill Here, Drill Now, and Pay less to cut gas and diesel prices. Prices for gas, diesel, fertilizer, seed, food, insurance, health care, and mortgages keep going up, and they're changing the way North Dakotans live. In Congress, he will vote to save you money to keep gas and food prices down.

Duane Sand is an Iraq War veteran and Navy Reserve Commander. He knows that we need to win the War on Terror. Our men and women in harm's way need all the resources and support we can give them. Fighting terrorists abroad keeps us safe here in America.

Tips on Voting

Rikki Trageton, Independent Living Advocate

Make informed decisions. Find out who is running for what office, and get to know their names. Find out where candidates stand on issues that are important to you. Attend a candidate's forum, read the newspaper, or conduct research on the internet.

Find out ahead of time where your polling place is. If it is not accessible, vote by absentee ballot. Vote early by absentee ballot or through early voting (if available). On Election Day – Get out and VOTE! Avoid long lines-Go to the polls early. If you experience difficulties with accessibility during the voting process, file a complaint with your county auditor or secretary of state.

To vote in North Dakota you must:

- Be a US citizen
- Be at least 18 years old on Election Day
- Be a legal North Dakota resident
- Be a resident of your voting precinct for 30 days preceding Election Day

North Dakota is the only state that does not require voter registration. On Election Day you must bring a valid form of ID with you to the polling place to vote. Without ID you may still vote if a poll worker can vouch for your identity and residence or you complete a voter's affidavit on which you certify under oath your identity and residence. You find out more information by calling the North Dakota Secretary of State at 1-800-352-0867 or by visiting www.nd.gov/sos.

To vote in Minnesota you must:

- Be a US citizen
- Be at least 18 years old on Election Day
- Will have resided in Minnesota 20 days immediately preceding Election Day
- Have any felony record discharged, expired, or completed
- Not be under guardianship that has removed your voting rights
- Not be ruled legally incompetent by the courts

You must register to vote in Minnesota. You are required to register 20 days before the general election in order to have your name be on the list of registered voters at the polling places on Election Day. You may also register on Election Day. You must also bring a valid ID. You can find more information out about voting by calling the Minnesota Secretary of State's office at 1-877-600-8683 or by visiting www.sos.state.mn.us.



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The Mission of Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living is to work toward equality and inclusion for people with disabilities through programs of empowerment, community education and systems change.

We envision a society where ALL individuals are valued, respected and have equal opportunity, access, responsibility, and freedom of choice in all aspects of life.

Civic Engagement In Action



Disability Rights Advocates take part in Grassroots Advocacy: Transforming Yourself and Your Community Training” September 19th.