

NASHIA celebrates the 30th anniversary of the ADA!



by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

July 26, 2020, marks the **30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, the landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. All through the month of July, organizations and agencies have celebrated this anniversary celebrating the heroes and heroines who made this possible, and the challenges still ahead to ensure that the rights of people are inherent to all human beings, regardless of disability, race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

30 Years Ago . . .

"Three weeks ago we celebrated our nation's Independence Day. Today we're here to rejoice in and celebrate another 'independence day,' one that is long overdue. With today's signing of the landmark Americans for Disabilities Act, every man, woman, and child with a disability can now pass through once-closed doors into a bright new era of equality, independence, and freedom." -- President George H.W. Bush



Pres. George H.W. Bush signed legislation establishing the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990

Looking Ahead . . .



In keeping with the practice of social distancing and safety during this time of COVID-19 pandemic, many celebrations are being held via video conferencing. Featured above are panelists that participated in such as an event on Wednesday, July 22. The celebration, "Honoring the Fight: 30 Years of the ADA," was co-hosted by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Robert Casey, Jr. (D-PA) and moderated by Maria Town, President and CEO, American Association of People with Disabilities. Panelists included:

- Senator Tom Harkin, (D-IA), a 40 year member of Congress and Senate and author of the ADA
- Former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, (R-PA), who is the current Chair of the National Organization on Disability (NOD), former Congressman, and First Secretary of Homeland Security
- Claudia Gordon, Disability Rights Attorney and Advocate, Former Obama Administration Appointee
- Elena Hung, Executive Director and Co-founder, Little Lobbyists
- Rebecca Cokley, Director, Disability Justice Initiative, Center for American Progress

Former Senator Harkin recognized and reminisced about all those who helped to make the ADA a reality. While he was pleased at what took place, he also challenged people to continue to address such issues as employment and our health care system. He suggested that attendant services be considered a reasonable accommodation for employment. He also talked about including people with invisible disabilities in efforts to improve accessibility. Gov. Ridge said that disability groups need to be coalescing and "singing off the same page" as there is strength in numbers. He chastised today's Congress for failure to not recognize health needs, particularly during this pandemic. He noted how proud Pres. Bush was that the ADA effort was bi-partisan.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) said that before ADA, veterans who had served their country could not find jobs due to their military-related disabilities and children had few opportunities. ADA, he said, should really be called the "Americans with Ability Act," and added how employment is so critical for people to lead

independent lives. He said we still need bi-partisan support to defend the ADA and to continue to advocate for inclusion. Other presenters noted the role of technology today that wasn't even considered 30 years ago.

How Does the ADA Impact People with Brain Injury?

The definition of disability is defined as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. As such, individuals with brain injury may be entitled to accommodations with regard to education, transportation, housing, telecommunications, and employment.

Reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable an applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions. Reasonable accommodation also includes adjustments to assure that an individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those of employees without disabilities. The ADA is a culmination of policies, lawsuits, and other laws enacted over the decades to promote community integration by providing equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities.

For more information about the ADA . . .

The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) at the Administration for Community Living (ACL) funds the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network that provides information, guidance, and training on how to implement the ADA in order to support its mission to "assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

The 30th anniversary Tool Kit, including the logo used in this communication, is a project of the ADA National Network and its ten regional ADA Centers across the United States and can be accessed [here](#). For further information regarding the ADA and work of the ADA National Network, click [here](#).

Please feel free to forward and share with disability advocates, advisory boards/councils, families and individuals with brain injury in your State.

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