

The President's Radio Address  
*July 28, 2001*

Good morning. This past week our country marked the 11th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I'm proud that it was my father who signed that landmark legislation into law. And all Americans can take pride in the changes the ADA has brought into the lives of millions of citizens with disabilities.

Because of that law, Americans with disabilities have gained greater access to public places. They have more options in choosing their homes, using public transportation, traveling, and staying in hotels. Many have joined the workforce, thanks to reasonable accommodations made by their employers. This has made our country a fairer society, more considerate and welcoming to all our citizens.

As people with disabilities find more opportunities to use their gifts and talents, we also become a stronger, more productive nation. Some barriers remain, however, and as long as they stand, our work is unfinished. In February I announced a plan called the New Freedom Initiative to expand even further the opportunities available to people with disabilities.

This initiative will help more Americans with disabilities enter the workforce by improving transportation or making it easier to work from home. It will encourage private companies to develop new assistive technologies, like computer monitors for people with visual impairments, infrared pointers for people who cannot use their hands to operate a keyboard, and lighter wheelchairs to increase mobility.

And my New Freedom Initiative will help community groups, churches, synagogues, mosques, and civic organizations to improve access for people with disabilities. Many of these groups are trying their best to meet the requirements of ADA, and we will help them.

We must also work to ensure that people with disabilities are not arbitrarily isolated or kept apart. I recently signed an Executive order requiring Federal agencies to work with State and local authorities to allow people with disabilities to move out of institutions and into community settings. I've also instructed the Attorney General and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to fully enforce title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensuring that no one is unjustifiably institutionalized.

My administration is also committed to requiring all Federal agencies to make sure that their Internet sites are more accessible for people with disabilities, both inside and outside the Government.

We have made significant progress in advancing the New Freedom Initiative. But some of these reforms will require the Congress to provide the resources we need to fully implement the New Freedom Initiative and fulfill the promise of ADA.

All of these efforts will build on the progress we have made as a society since the Americans with Disabilities Act became law. During the last 11 years, we have opened the doors of opportunity to millions of people with disabilities, and together, we can ensure that everyone with a disability enjoys the respect that all citizens deserve.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:13 a.m. on July 27 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.