

Campaign 2000: Who is Talking to You?

by J. Archer O'Reilly III

We know that another watershed year has arrived in America when a major party candidate for president refuses to support the most important piece of civil rights legislation signed by his own father. Lest we delude ourselves, understand that the hard-won rights and opportunities for people with disabilities symbolized and protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) are under attack.

An estimated 35 million Americans with disabilities are of voting age. That is a huge voting block and should mean that candidates must take our concerns seriously. However, it is meaningless if we are silent and unseen. As the following campaign reports will demonstrate, some candidates do not believe that we care enough about ourselves and our loved ones to take an active part in the governing of America. To protect the quality of life of people with disabilities we must participate in this election. Not only must we vote, we must be seen and heard in every city and town.

I strongly urge you to take a careful look at the candidates, at every level, not just presidential, think about what their election would mean for people with disabilities, and get involved. Speak to your friends, be seen at campaign events, volunteer, if

possible, for candidates you like, use your phone or the internet to make yourself heard, and then vote.

The following are excerpts from campaign reports by Nancy Flinn, a reporter for the interesting new disability web site **halftheplanet.com**. They are quoted to offer a place to begin, not end, your consideration.

George W. Bush

The quest for candidate George W. Bush's policy on Americans with Disabilities and his record on disability yields little. The fact that Americans with disabilities comprise America's largest minority at 54 million; the fact that each individual has family and friends who care about disability issues ... should influence every political candidate who cares about being elected. Apparently, not George W. Bush. Yet.

A staff member in the policy office at "Bush for President" headquarters in Austin, Texas "didn't know where the statement on Americans with disabilities or a disability issues position paper was." When asked, "Does Governor Bush have one?" she replied, "I imagine so. I'll give your request to someone who knows where it's at ... and we'll get it to you." Nothing yet. [ed.

continued on page 4

Assistance with Prescriptions

With the passage of the last Massachusetts state budget, not only was the funding of the Senior Pharmacy Program increased by \$21.7 million, the rules of eligibility were expanded to include non-elderly people with disabilities. In the current session of the legislature there is a promising move to extend free prescription medication coverage to all elderly and persons with disabilities. While the current program is good, and a great improvement over the past, things may get even better in the near future. In the meantime, do not let these benefits escape you if you are eligible.

The Senior Pharmacy Program (SPP) provides up to \$1,250 per year to help pay for prescription drugs. Prescriptions covered include all Therapeutic Classes except those excluded from

continued on page 8

INSIDE

FROM THE CENTER
 EMPLOYMENT
 HOUSING ADVICE
 RESOURCES

Spring 2000

Concerned about the cost of Special Education, the Massachusetts legislature is discussing ways to reduce both the number of children eligible for special education and the standards of education to be offered. The House Speaker, Thomas M. Finneran, has won House support for eliminating 30,000 students from the rolls and replacing the Massachusetts standard of "maximum feasible benefit" with the less meaningful Federal standard of "free and appropriate" education.

Every parent in Massachusetts whose child has a disability should watch this debate with great concern. Indeed, every citizen should be aware that they have a vital stake in the outcome of this effort. It is true that Massachusetts has the second highest ratio of students in special education. It is also true, according to the McKinsey report, that these students in Massachusetts have higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and higher return rates to regular classes than in other states. Are not these the results that society wants to see from special education? Would it not be reasonable to conclude that the Massachusetts approach to special education is successful and, therefore, its budget appropriate and money well spent?

The question should not be what is wrong with special education. Rather the question should be what is wrong with "regular" public education. If all our schools operated on the standard of providing the maximum feasible education benefit to each and every student there would be no "special education." If we made an honest effort to determine how to best educate each student as an individual and then committed the resources necessary to help them achieve, there would be no power struggle between the parents of children of different abilities.

There is no natural law that says "special needs" students and "gifted" students and "vocational" students and "average" students should be at war with each other in our schools. It is the misguided belief that all students can be served by a cookie-cutter model of education which leads to the dissatisfaction and underachievement of too many students today. Rather than water down the standards and objectives of special education, we should raise the standards and expectations for all students. Rather than compare the cost of various elements of our education program, we should consider the cost of failure in our schools. Rather than pitting various segments of our society against each other in a fight to do the best for their children, we should join together in order to do the best for all our children and for ourselves.

Disability Issues [ISSN 1063-9373] is published quarterly by the Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities, Inc., a nonprofit agency that provides information, referral, and problem-solving assistance on disability issues. The publication and distribution of *Disability Issues* is made possible only through the financial support of many individuals and organizations. Mention of a product or service in this newsletter does not constitute endorsement.

Feel free to reproduce this newsletter, in total or in part, using the following guidelines: When reproducing only in part, please credit to *Disability Issues* [vol., no., and date], the newsletter of the Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities in Massachusetts. For articles that appear under a byline or that will be altered in any way, please obtain permission from the editor.

President: Nancy C. Schock

Editor: J. Archer O'Reilly III

Compliance Resource for Business

Very few people with an interest in disability have escaped the experience of having friends or acquaintances complain about the burden placed on business by laws which require them not to discriminate against persons with a disability. The media's fascination with the few dramatic abuses of these civil rights laws, combined with the widespread ignorance about disability, has led many Americans to believe that this is just another case of government interference with almighty capitalism.

As a follow-up to our article on the Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 in the last issue, we offer a valuable resource which is available to increase real opportunity for employment while reducing business people's fear and misinformation about hiring people with disabilities. While there may be similar programs in your immediate area, this one is national and has a wealth of business support. If you need a resource to recommend to your friends in the business world who are still confused as to what all the fuss is about - try this.

continued on page 7

Correction

Ray Glazier's article on the Work Incentives Improvement Act in the last issue contained a typographical error. On page three, column two, seventh line, it should have read 8 1/2 years - not 82 years.

We are sorry Ray.

Section 8 Housing Changes Enacted

There have been a few changes in the most useful housing program for people with disabilities in Massachusetts. There is some hope that the changes will make the program more effective, fairer, and easier to use. The changes to the program will also allow policy makers to obtain a much clearer picture of the affordable housing need in Massachusetts. If you are now, or have ever considered, seeking a housing voucher, you should read this article and take a new look at housing voucher programs in your state.

The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 combined the Section 8 tenant-based Certificate and Housing Voucher Programs into a single program renamed the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). The HCVP went into effect on October 1, 1999. All applicants selected from a Section 8 waiting list, and current participants who either move or enter into a new lease while remaining in-place, on or after October 1, 1999, automatically become HCVP applicants and participants. Section 8 certificate participants who make no changes in their living situation will be converted to the HCVP at their second regularly scheduled annual reexamination.

One Waiting List

There will now be only one waiting list for the entire state of Massachusetts. It has been made clear that "portability" of vouchers permits a voucher-holder to

use the subsidy to lease a unit of their choice in any community in the United States or its territories where a public housing agency (PHA) is administering the Section 8 program. Here in Massachusetts, a Local Housing Authority (LHA) will sometimes try to enforce the regulation that permits the PHA to require an applicant who did not reside in the PHA's jurisdiction at the time of application to use the subsidy in its jurisdiction for one year before exercising portability rights. Due to a federal court ruling that the whole state is within the jurisdiction of any PHA in Massachusetts, these LHAs may not enforce this authority within the state. Therefore, any voucher issued within the state may be used anywhere within the state and there is no rationale for maintaining more than one waiting list. However, the family's right to portability at initial issuance of a voucher is subject to the family's meeting the income limits in the community where it first uses the subsidy to lease a unit. The HUD income limits vary by statistical area, and every applicant must be income-eligible both for issuance of the voucher and in the community where the first assisted unit is located. For any move after that income limits are not a consideration. Out-of-state applicants may be required to use the voucher within Massachusetts for one year before moving out of state.

Who Can Apply

Any family, individual, elderly

person and/or person with a disability that meets a Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) preference may apply. At least one member of the household must be a United States citizen or have eligible immigration status. The applicant household's total gross yearly income must be within the income limits established by HUD. DHCD preferences are:

- Homeless or living in substandard housing; or
- Involuntarily displaced by one or more of the following reasons and have not found permanent replacement housing: natural disaster, owner action other than eviction; fear of reprisal; completing a transitional housing program; government action; domestic violence; hate crimes; accessibility of a unit; or
- Paying 50% or more of monthly household income for rent and utilities for at least 90 consecutive days prior to selection.

Application Process

All eight of DHCD's regional administering agencies (RAA) will begin distributing and accepting applications on March 27, 2000. Applications are available on the internet at www.state.ma.us/dhcd/.

A list of the agencies can be found at the end of this article. **Do not** submit an application to more than one agency. Multiple applications will not be accepted. **Do not** apply if your name is currently on the waiting list through any one of DHCD's RAAs listed.

All applications received or postmarked by April 7, 2000 have been randomized by computer and placed on the waiting list using the computer generated order. Applications received

continued on page 5

Campaign 2000

continued from page 1

The requests of many other disability groups have, to date, had the same result.]

George W. Bush's web page, **georgewbush.com**, yields nothing when searched for "Americans with Disabilities"... . When queried for "Disability," six matches appear. There is no message or policy targeting voters with disabilities, their families and friends. Nothing yet.

In February, three of the four major presidential candidates ... had some position on disability on their web pages and as a part of their campaign. Bush had none. Two weeks before the primary in New Hampshire, the disability community and Independent Living advocates sponsored a candidates forum. Candidate Gore appeared in person, McCain and Bradley participated by phone. Bush did nothing.

According to several national leaders from the disability community, George W. Bush's record in Texas is mixed in its support and understanding (of) the rights, independence, and choice for people with disabilities championed by his father

According to Curtis Edmonds, the ADA Texas Coordinator at the Texas Governor's Committee, Governor Bush has been an advocate for state legislation that supports people with disabilities. "Community-based services have increased by 72% under his leadership," said Edmonds. "He has appointed many individuals with disabilities to various boards and Greg Abbott, a wheelchair user, to the Texas Supreme Court."

When Texas disability rights advocates protested Governor Bush's continued support for the Olmstead case, they held a press conference in front of the Governor's mansion in Austin. Governor Bush had them arrested for civil disobedience. [*Olmstead advocated nursing home and institutional care over community based options and was supported by only six other governors*] Following the U. S. Supreme Court ruling [*in favor of community care*], Bush set up the Texas Health and Human Services Commission for a comprehensive review of all services. ... Some 15,000 people with disabilities, including children, are living in Texas institutions. This is approximately one-third of all Americans with disabilities still in institutions.

Justin Dart, who served as Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services and Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities during the Bush administration, describes himself as a Republican for Vice President Al Gore. "He comes closest to my political ideal: America for All," said Dart. According to Dart, Bush is pledged to give strong consideration to the politics of the Republicans of the far right "who have opposed virtually all of our rights and empowerment initiatives." [**ed.** *Justin Dart is widely credited with being one of the leading people responsible for bringing Ronald Reagan to the presidency and for the passage of the ADA.*]

Andrew Batavia, Associate Professor at Florida International University indicates he cannot support either of the two remaining candidates. The former Bush appointee and McCain aide states that on disability issues, Governor

George W. Bush gets a zero. "He won't meet with disability leaders or representatives and he has no record on disability."

Al Gore

Searching for Democratic Presidential candidate Al Gore's stand on disability reveals outreach to and consideration of the community of Americans with disabilities, their families and friends as a powerful voting block to capture in the November elections. (They) have captured the attention of Al Gore and found a place on this campaign agenda.

The Gore web site, **algore2000.com**, has 54 listings when queried for "disability." Americans with disabilities are targeted with an information page under the Gore agenda. Issues key to full participation of individuals with disabilities are addressed, such as the expansions of employment and educational opportunities, enforcement of civil rights laws, saving Social Security, expanding access to quality health care, increasing accessibility, and the FDR Memorial.

The Gore 2000 site includes an interactive town hall where anyone can ask a question of Vice President Al Gore online. Archival Town Hall questions and answers are available by clicking on one of 40 subjects including Americans with Disabilities, African Americans, Native Americans, and Veterans.

Staff members at Gore 2000 headquarters in Nashville provide the web page as a reference but would answer questions, send or fax information on the candidate's stand on ... disabilities. As well, the campaign's Director of Public Liaison and Constituency, Janet Murguia, does outreach to disability organizations that

Campaign 2000

want to meet with Al Gore as a group.

Gore's campaign chairman is former Congressman Tony Coelho, who has dealt with lifelong epilepsy, and served as Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities since 1995.

The Gore record on disability includes co-sponsoring and voting for the ADA. ... In both the house and senate, his voting record supports other key legislation that expands rights and opportunities for adults and children with disabilities. Most Americans are aware of Al Gore's wife, Tipper's commitment and work on mental health

issues. Her advocacy and interest sparked a national White House Conference on Mental Health in 1999.

The Clinton/Gore Administration has set a record of appointing the greatest number of individuals with disabilities to government positions of significant public responsibility ... according to disability rights leader Justin Dart.

Currently one candidate, Al Gore, is addressing issues and targeting the very important votes of Americans with disabilities, their families and friends.

.....

Conclusion

The above reports by Nancy Flinn are a snapshot of the 2000 campaign as this article is

written. They form a context for you to think about the candidates, but they are not the final word on the race for the presidency. As the campaign continues, additional reports on the election can be read at halftheplanet.com/news. If we keep asking, the Bush campaign may eventually decide they cannot ignore 35 million voters. When, and if, they start to answer the concerns of people with disabilities you can look for the reaction of the community on the web.

Remember our community has the right to be taken seriously and the votes to make that happen. To attract and elect the political leaders we want and need, we must make ourselves seen, heard, and counted. The final decision is yours. Don't just vote - participate!

Housing

continued from page 3

later will be added to the waiting list by date and time of receipt.

Preferences

All applicants who meet DHCD preference are ranked equally, except for single applicants who are not elderly, disabled, or displaced. Any single person who is not elderly, disabled, or displaced cannot be assisted until all elderly, disabled, and displaced persons have been assisted.

Non-preference applicants currently on the waiting list will be selected at a rate that will achieve a 10% leasing rate in the category. Effective March 27, 2000 applications will not be accepted from those without preferences.

A regional residency preference will be applied as a ranking preference to all applicants. The

preference areas will be based on the administrative areas of DHCD's eight regional administering agencies. This regional preference will be based on the address provided in the application. Out-of-state applicants will be assigned a regional preference of zero. RAA's will select applicants in order, based on the regional designation. This will not restrict an applicant's mobility in any way. Any new allocations of standard Section 8 subsidies received from HUD after 1/1/2000 will be distributed without regard to the regional preference.

Regional Administering Agencies

Berkshire Housing Services, Inc.
74 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-1630

Community Teamwork, Inc.
167 Dutton Street
Lowell, MA 01852
(978) 459-0551

South Middlesex Opportunity Council

300 Howard Street
Framingham, MA 01701
(508) 620-1230

HAP, Inc.
322 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 785-1251

Housing Assistance Corporation
460 West Main Street
Hyannis, MA 02601
(508) 771-5400

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Inc.
569 Columbus Avenue, # 1
Boston, MA 02118
(617) 859-0400

Rural Housing Improvement, Inc.
218 Central Street, P.O. Box 429
Winchendon, MA 01475
(978) 297-5300

South Shore Housing Development Corp.
169 Summer Street
Kingston, MA 02364
(781) 585-3885

Perkins School Reaches Out to Elders

The Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts is offering a new program called The Elder Learning Program. Designed to compliment its in-home services, The Elder Learning Center will bring together individuals who are elderly and visually impaired for training and recreational activities on the Perkins campus. Most of the programs will mirror the essential training and activities currently provided within the home, by Perkins Outreach Services, but will offer the alternative of learning and sharing in a group setting. It will also offer exciting new topics such as a book club, gardening, and oriental cooking.

Perkins Outreach Services to Elders is an individualized program in which highly trained Perkins professionals visit the homes of elders with visual impairments. Staff help elders adapt ways of caring for themselves and going about their routine tasks and activities. These home services may be arranged by calling Perkins at the number below.

Learning Center programs will run Tuesdays and Thursdays. Classes are scheduled in half day blocks from 10 a.m. - 12 noon and 1p.m. - 3 p.m.. Participants may choose to attend a full day (both sessions) or either one of the half-day sessions. Participants will be responsible for their own transportation, although staff can work with them to identify options. The program is offered at no cost.

You may contact the Elder Learning Center at (617) 972-7643.

Support Group via Telephone

Boston Self Help Center has been providing peer counseling in a cross-disability setting for over twenty years. Peer counselors are people with a disability or chronic illness who have training and experience providing mentoring, support, information, and resource referrals.

Boston Self Help is now offering a Support Group via Telephone for people with disabilities or chronic illness. The group will be led by two peer counselors and all meetings will be held by phone. The group is free to Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission clients, and limited scholarships are available for some others.

For more information, please call (617) 277-0080.

3Com Seeks Workers with Disabilities

3Com, a major e-business corporation with offices in Marlborough, Massachusetts, has announced an Affirmative Action Program to provide equal employment opportunity to qualified individuals with a disability. As part of this program, 3Com makes all reasonable accommodations to the physical or mental limitations of qualified employees with a disability.

They ask interested candidates to review all job opportunities at their corporate website, www.3Com.com.

TIME Gets Large Print

TIME, the weekly news magazine familiar to all Americans is now available in large print. TIME *Large Edition* is responding to a growing population of aging Americans and other adults who need to remain informed and connected with the changing world. The editorially rich, folio size, weekly issues ship during the same week as TIME's regular edition. TIME is the first newsmagazine to produce a weekly large print edition.

TIME *Large Edition* features 16-point type with a minimum of 80% of the editorial content of the regular edition. From the matte finished paper to the integrated graphics and photos – changes recommended by Lighthouse International – the new edition is formatted specifically for people with vision impairments and for people on the go.

The subscription price is \$79.97 for 54 issues, and may be ordered by calling (800) 282-0079. You may want to ask them to send you a sample issue to review before ordering.

The Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization.

All contributions made to the Information Center are fully tax deductible including those made at the same time as requesting your name to be added to our mailing list.

There is no charge for this newsletter.

Thank you for your support.

Employment

continued from page 2

The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Rehabilitation Research and Training Center works closely with business associations, corporate partners, individuals with disabilities, and rehabilitation providers to analyze barriers to employment and to determine the best practices for increasing employment of people with disabilities. The following are among the services provided by the VCU Center.

The Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Workplace Supports - is funded by the U. S. Department of Education and partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Society for Human Resource Management, and the Charter Business Roundtable. It is working on return to work strategies for individuals who become disabled; analyze the effectiveness of disability management programs; determine the impact of financial tax credits on hiring, retention, and advancement; assess work support interventions; and evaluate employer perceptions

of hiring and retaining workers with disabilities. The Center provides training methods and materials and conducts training in this area.

The State Partnership Initiative (SPI) - is a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The project helps 18 designated state projects develop innovative and integrated statewide programs of services and supports for residents with disabilities. Some of the systems being developed include: employer partnerships, customer driven services, Medicare Buy-In programs, and employer supports.

The National Supported Employment Consortium (SEC) - VCU is a lead organization; others include Indiana University Institute on Disability and Community, TransCen, Inc. Boston's Children's Hospital Institute for Community Inclusion, and the University of Montana Rural Institute. The purpose of SEC is to critically evaluate supported employment programs nationally and provide technical assistance to state and local agencies.

If you are an employer, or make recommendations to employers about hiring and retaining workers with disabilities (*yourself included*), you may find some of the following resources helpful.

Fast Facts:

Recruiting from Nontraditional Sources of Labor (March 2000). Provides information to employers on how to find new pools of labor to fill skilled and unskilled job openings.

Business Tax Credits & Deductions for Employment of People with Disabilities (Jan. 2000). Highlights tax credits and incentives available to help employers cover accommodation costs

Reasonable Accommodations & the Americans with Disabilities Act (Sept. 1999). Reviews the definition, key terms and procedures related to job accommodations under Title I of the ADA.

Newsletters

Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace (Winter 2000).
Tapping New Talent for Business: The Manpower, Inc. Approach (Summer 1999)

continued on page 8

Subscriptions to ***Disability Issues*** are available to all who find this publication useful and interesting. There is no fee, however, contributions to help defray the cost ensure the future of our efforts. Your tax-deductible donation, in whatever amount you can manage, will be greatly appreciated, and put to good use.

Please send *Disability Issues* to:

Make donation checks payable to the **Information Center**
P.O. Box 750119, Arlington Heights, MA 02475-0119

Information Center

P.O. Box 750119
Arlington Heights, MA 02475-0119

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Boston, MA

PERMIT NO. 59443

IMPORTANT: If you no longer read *Disability Issues*, please help us serve others. Write or call us to cancel this subscription.

Prescriptions

continued from page 1

MassHealth. Some prescription drugs may require prior approval from the Division of Medical Assistance. However, Insulin and disposable syringes with needles are included.

Who is Eligible?

In spite of the name, people with disabilities are included in the Senior Pharmacy Program. To be eligible you must:

- Be a resident of Massachusetts;
- Be age 65 or older OR, if under 65, work less than 40 hours per month and meet the disability guidelines of CommonHealth;
- Have a gross annual income less than \$15,492 (individual) or \$20,769 (married couple) [*Married applicants may choose to apply as individuals*]; and
- Not be enrolled in MassHealth or CommonHealth.

You may apply even though you

have prescription drug coverage through your HMO or other insurance provider. SPP can help you pay for medication after you have exhausted your other insurance benefits.

Coverage is also available to those whose gross annual income is higher than the above limits, but less than \$41,220, and who are experiencing high prescription expenses relative to their income. If you have particularly high medication costs, call the Division of Insurance to see if you qualify.

What is Provided?

Once enrolled, you will receive up to \$1,250 per year to pay for prescriptions after any other prescription benefits from other sources are exhausted. At the time of purchase, co-payments are \$3 for generic drugs, insulin and syringes and \$10 for "brand name" drugs.

To apply, call the Division of Medical Assistance at (800) 243-4636(voice) or (800) 813-7787(TTD/tty).

Employment

continued from page 2

The Art and Science of Business Partnerships (Winter 2000)
Who's Providing the Support? (Spring 1999)

Personnel Training

Supported Employment Web-Based Certificate Series - an on-line course for national participation.
SET NET Seminars - VCU satellite training events.
Business Seminars - corporate-based seminar designed to increase diversity and employment of people with disabilities.
Using SSI Work Incentive - on-line course with open enrollment.

For more information about the VCU Center, listings of trainings, current employment news, and to order Center publications; go to the Center's web site at **www.worksupport.com**, or write to them at VCU\RRTC on Workplace Supports, P.O. Box 842011, 1314 West Main Street, Richmond, VA 23284-2011.