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National Disability Employment Awareness Month: Fact Sheet

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Introduction

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is observed annually in October. It celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities to America’s workplaces and the economy, and “reaffirms the commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens.” Each year, the month is celebrated with a theme chosen by the U.S. Department of Labor. For 2023, the theme is “Advancing Access and Equity,” which will be an opportunity to celebrate the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the impacts of that legislation to address access and equity for people with disabilities.

History and Legislation

As a precursor to National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), in 1945, Congress established “the first week in October of each year as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week” (Public Law 176, 79th Congress). In 1962, to bring more attention to those with all types of disabilities, Congress dropped the word “Physically” through the adoption of P.L. 91-442, resulting in the condensed National Employ the Handicapped Week. More recently, in 1988, P.L. 100-630 expanded the commemoration to a month and altered its name to the current National Disability Employment Awareness Month. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is codified at 36 U.S.C. §121.

Related CRS Reports

CRS has prepared reports that explain or address working with a disability. Some of these include the following:

- CRS In Focus IF10506, *Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)*, by William R. Morton
- CRS Report R43255, *The Mental Health Workforce: A Primer*, by Elayne J. Heisler
- CRS Report R43468, *Special Minimum Wages for Workers with Disabilities: Frequently Asked Questions*, by Benjamin Collins

CRS also has a report on the process of observing commemorative days, weeks, and months:

- CRS Report R44431, *Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice, 113th to 115th Congress*, by Jacob R. Straus

Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions

Members of Congress can make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the *Congressional Record* to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples that may be of assistance in preparing such statements.

Senator Richard Burr, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month,” Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 167 (October 26, 2021), pp. S7365-S7366.

Representative Earl L. “Buddy” Carter, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month,” House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 165 (October 22, 2019), p. H8304.

Representative Andy Levin, “Recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month,” House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 165 (October 21, 2019), p. H8283.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, “Raising Awareness of National Disability Employment Awareness Month,” House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 164 (October 23, 2018), p. E1443.

Presidential Proclamations

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. The law requests that the President issue a proclamation each year. Some recent NDEAM proclamations, from the Compilation of Presidential Documents, include the following:

- Presidential Proclamations—Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (2021-)
- Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017-2021)
- Presidential Proclamations—Barack H. Obama (2009-2017)
- Presidential Proclamations—George W. Bush (2001-2009)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the GovInfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Statistics

U.S. Census Bureau, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month: October 2023.”

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics—2022.”

U.S. Census Bureau, “Disability Data.”

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Persons with a Disability: Barriers to Employment, Types of Assistance, and Other Labor-Related Issues—July 2021.”

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, “Disability Employment Statistics.”

Educational, Cultural, and Advocacy Organizations and Resources

Numerous government agencies and nongovernmental organizations provide information on and promote advocacy for the disabled. Some of these organizations include the following:

U.S. Department of Labor, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2023.” Official webpage for NDEAM. Provides general information on the annual commemorative month, highlighting promotional materials.

Library of Congress, “National Disability Employment Month, About.” Provides general information on the annual commemorative month, highlighting access to Library of Congress resources.

Library of Congress, “National Disability Employment Month: A Commemorative Observances Legal Research Guide.” Provides links to legislative branch and executive branch primary resource historical documents. These documents formulated and impacted the current commemorative month, as well as preceding observances for the working disabled.

U.S. Department of Labor, “Office of Disability Employment Policy.” Agency within the U.S. Department of Labor presiding over NDEAM.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Spotlight on Statistics: Labor Market Characteristics of People with a Disability.” Visual display of data promoting the importance of NDEAM.

Social Security Administration, “Working While Disabled—Social Security Can Help.” Information on the exploration of working while receiving disability benefits.

American Bar Association, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.” Workplace rights and examples of resources for disabled worker opportunities.

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