

## **Chapter 3. Integrating Americans with Disabilities into the Workforce**

Employment is a key to independence, empowerment, and improved quality of life. To help increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the Administration supports a strategy that includes simultaneous improvements in training, creative job accommodations such as teleworking, accessible transportation, and employer education.

### **Expanding Telecommuting**

Telecommuting is increasing in the private and public sectors. The International Telework Association & Council 2001 Annual Survey found that there were 28.8 million teleworkers, an increase of almost 17 percent over the previous year. The Office of Personnel Management found a 39.5 percent increase in the number of reported Federal teleworkers over seven months, based on a 2001 evaluation. For individuals with disabilities, teleworking can expand the universe of potential and accessible employment. New Freedom Initiative proposals will encourage more employers to provide computer equipment and Internet access for teleworking and to provide support so that employees with disabilities have greater options to benefit from teleworking's flexibility.

#### *Accomplishments*

- The President secured \$20 million in the FY 2002 budget in matching telework grants to states to help people with disabilities purchase equipment to work from home. The Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration will administer the fund.

#### *Next Steps*

- The President's FY 2003 budget includes a proposal to allow individuals with disabilities to exclude from taxable income the value of computers, software, and other equipment provided by the individual's employer for telecommuting purposes.

### **Swift Implementation of "Ticket to Work"**

The landmark Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) provides incentives to work for the more than 7.5 million Americans with disabilities receiving benefits under Federal disability programs. Prior to the "Ticket to Work" law, recipients of disability income and health benefits could not engage in any substantial work without losing their benefits, a consequence that contributed to a dismal employment rate for people with disabilities. As part of the New Freedom Initiative, the President is committed to ensuring the Act's swift implementation and to breaking the pattern of dependence.

#### *Accomplishments and Next Steps*

- The President pressed for swift implementation of the TWWIIA. The Social Security Administration issued the TWWIIA regulations, which went into effect for the first 13 states in the planned rollout on January 28, 2002. The rollout will be completed for all 50 states by the end of 2003.

## **Full Enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

President Bush believes that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been an invaluable tool in the movement toward full integration of individuals with disabilities, but recognizes that there is still much more to be done. The President is committed to further integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce by encouraging ADA Title I-exempt businesses, which are those with fewer than 15 employees, to comply with the ADA. ADA-exempt businesses that make voluntary accommodations reap bottom-line benefits by reaching new customers and talented employees who would otherwise be excluded.

### *Status*

- To promote employment in the small business sector, the President requested but did not receive \$5 million in the FY 2002 budget for the Small Business Administration to help small businesses comply with the ADA.

### *Administration Accomplishments*

- The Department of Justice began the ADA Business Connection in January 2002. The ADA Business Connection is an intensive outreach and technical assistance initiative aimed at assisting small businesses in complying with the ADA and integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce. Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., held a series of meetings with representatives of the business and disability communities; the first involved 55 leaders of business groups and disability organizations. As part of this project, the Department has developed a new ADA Business Connection destination on its ADA Web site and a series of "ADA Business Briefs," which are one-page explanations of issues related to business, employment, and contracting.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has embarked upon a series of workshops to educate small businesses on the employment of individuals with disabilities. The Commission will partner with chambers of commerce, associations, and development centers outside of major metropolitan areas. The Commission is expanding upon its traditional enforcement role regarding Federal anti-discrimination statutes to offer innovative education and technical assistance strategies to the employer community. Partnering with the Department of Justice, the Commission will offer small businesses insights into the ADA relating to Title III, which covers public accommodations and commercial facilities.
- To promote voluntary compliance with the ADA, the Department of Justice initiated Project Civic Access. Rather than focusing on individual entities within a community, Project Civic Access is a national effort to ensure that all aspects of towns and cities are fully accessible to people with disabilities. In the Bush Administration, as of March 2002, the Department has reached 21 agreements with cities and towns across the country.
- The Department of Justice continues to pursue full enforcement of the ADA. During the past year, for example, the Department has defended the constitutionality of the ADA in Federal courts; has achieved accessibility in local communities across the country, from Kauai, Hawaii, to San Antonio, Texas, to New Orleans, Louisiana; has brought about the full accessibility of newly constructed facilities; and has ensured that deaf persons receive

effective communication, including sign language interpreters, in hospitals across the Nation.

## **Innovative Transportation Solutions**

Inadequate transportation inhibits employment for all people, but is an even greater barrier to people with disabilities. New Freedom Initiative policies seek to test new transportation ideas and develop partnerships to increase access to alternate means of transportation, such as vans with specialty lifts, modified automobiles, and ride-share programs for those who cannot get to buses or other forms of mass transit.

Direct infusion of funding into transportation programs will benefit local economies. Cambridge Systematics, Inc., reports in "Public Transportation and the Nation's Economy" that businesses and local communities have benefited from transit operations spending, with a \$32 million increase in business sales and an additional 570 jobs for each \$10 million in public transportation investments.

### *Status*

- The President requested but did not receive \$45 million in the FY 2002 budget for the Department of Transportation pilot transportation programs.
- The President requested but did not receive \$100 million in the FY 2002 budget for the Department of Transportation for a matching grant program for community-based transportation alternatives.

### *Administration Transportation Accomplishments*

- The Department of Transportation, through its Job Access and Reverse Commute Program, has funded over 200 state and local grantees in 44 states to provide new employment transportation services for low-income persons, including persons with disabilities. This competitive grants program funds additional transportation services to jobs and job training sites and addresses unmet needs of persons with disabilities.
- The Department of Transportation created an interagency working group to coordinate the numerous Federal programs that fund transportation for persons with disabilities. The working group is producing a resource guide identifying Federal programs that fund transportation for persons with disabilities and is developing examples of best practice transportation services in getting persons with disabilities to work and employment support services that local officials can use in city planning.
- In March 2002, the Federal Transit Administration and Project Action held a National Dialogue on Accessible Transportation to foster communication between the transit industry and the disability community in identifying accessibility issues and creative, effective solutions. A subsequent meeting in June 2002 and recommendations report are planned.

### *Next Steps*

- The President will seek authorization to establish the Department of Transportation's New Freedom Initiative program and requests \$145 million in FY 2003 for a competitive grants program to provide additional transportation services for job access and a pilot

program to demonstrate innovative solutions for transportation problems still faced by persons with disabilities.

- The President's FY 2003 budget expands the funding for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program to the full authorization level of \$150 million, an increase of \$50 million since the President took office. This program includes job-related transportation services for people with disabilities.

## **Providing Employment Training and Supports**

### *General Employment Accomplishments*

- The President's FY 2002 budget proposed almost doubling the funding for the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to \$43 million. Congress provided \$38 million, a 66 percent increase above FY 2001. The Office focuses on eliminating barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities.
- Several Federal agencies have implemented additional projects that further the New Freedom Initiative goal of increasing employment. These include grants from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to states that want to develop health care coverage for workers with disabilities. In addition, the Department of Labor received \$20 million in FY 2002 for Work Incentive Grants to provide competitive grants to increase access to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities through one-stop career centers.

### *General Employment Next Steps*

- To improve employment outcomes through the Department of Education's Vocational Rehabilitation program, the President has requested an increase of \$135 million in the FY 2003 budget. In addition, the President has requested \$30 million in incentive grants to states to reward vocational rehabilitation agencies based on their performance.
- The President's FY 2003 budget includes a 24 percent, or \$9 million, increase in funding for the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the Department of Labor.
- The President has requested an increase of \$3 million, for a total of \$9 million, in FY 2003 for the Youth Training and Services program in the Department of Labor. This program helps integrate youth with significant disabilities into mainstream workforce programs and technology-related careers.