

So the notion of flexibility will in no way undermine the basic rights of Federal workers. Workers will retain whistle-blower protection, collective bargaining rights, and protection against unlawful discrimination. The new Secretary must have the freedom to get the right people in the right job at the right time and to hold them accountable. He needs the ability to move money and resources quickly in response to new threats, without all kinds of bureaucratic rules and obstacles. And when we face unprecedented threats, like we're facing, we cannot have business as usual.

I am—I appreciate the work of Senator Lieberman. He's working hard. I am concerned, however, the way the committee has passed out the homeland security bill. The bill doesn't have enough managerial flexibility, as far as I'm concerned. I look forward to working with the Senator and the Republican Members to get the bill right, to make sure that when we look back at what we've done, we will have left behind a legacy, a legacy that will allow future Senators and future Members of the House and a future President to say, "I can better protect the homeland, thanks to what was done in the year 2002."

It's very interesting that Harry Truman took on the same task. And as I understand, it was on this day 55^{*} years ago that he signed the National Security Act of 1947. It was an act that helped win the cold war by consolidating the Navy and the Army and the newly independent Air Force into what was interestingly called the National Military Establishment. [*Laughter*] It's now known as the Department of Defense. [*Laughter*]

But he thought boldly, and so did the Members of Congress. They recognized that after World War II, we were going to enter into a new era. And therefore they adjusted the sights of the Federal Government. That's what has happened now. History has called us into action. We're entering a new era, and we must adjust our sights, and we must respond.

And I know the Members here, and I know the Members on the floor that are working hard. And I'm confident we will re-

spond in a way that will make America proud—America proud of our efforts to come together but, more importantly, America more secure in the knowledge that we're doing everything we can to protect the homeland.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless your work, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:44 a.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. John G. Rowland of Connecticut; Gov. Angus S. King, Jr., of Maine; Gov. Paul E. Patton of Kentucky; Michael S. Carona, sheriff-coroner, Orange County, CA; and Alejandro Avila, who is accused of the July 16 murder of 5-year-old Samantha Rynn in Stanton, CA.

Remarks on the Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

July 26, 2002

Well, thank you all for coming, and welcome to the White House. We like to call this the people's house, and we're glad you're here. Today we celebrate the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, landmark legislation that opens the door for more than 50 million people living with disabilities—50 million Americans.

For 12 years, the ADA has proven that when people are treated with dignity and respect, our entire Nation benefits. And the best way to celebrate the progress the ADA has made is to continue and build on that progress.

I want to thank the Attorney General for coming today. I thank Elaine Chao for being here, Mel Martinez and Norm Mineta, Tony Principi, all members of my Cabinet. I appreciate Senator Bob Dole joining us today. I missed you yesterday in North Carolina, but thanks for coming. I appreciate so very much the leaders of the United States Congress who are here today with us, Senators and Members of the House of Representatives. Thank you all for taking time from what appears to be a pretty hectic time to lend your support and commitment to this vital goal, that all Americans are welcomed in America.

^{*} White House correction.

I appreciate Dick Thornburg, who was the Attorney General when my dad was the President when the ADA was signed, and he helped very much make sure that it was all done in a way that would pass muster. I thank him for being here as well.

I want to thank Cari Dominguez, who is the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, for coming; thank Kay James, who is the Director of Office of Personnel Management, for coming.

I also want to thank Lex Frieden for being here as well. Lex is a representative of the Dart family. Justin Dart passed away on June 22d, 2002. He was known by many as the father of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He had a huge impact on our Nation. We mourn his loss, and we thank Lex for being here.

The ADA is one of the most compassionate and successful civil rights laws in American history. It has made our schools and workplaces more welcoming. It has changed attitudes that once seemed unchangeable. And the ADA has given opportunity to some exceptional Americans.

Today I'm joined on stage by some exceptional Americans. They are participants in the National Youth Leadership Network, an organization sponsored by the Federal Government and committed to advancing the next generation of disability leaders. Through their hard work and determination, each of them embodies the true spirit of the ADA.

William Le'Ron Jackson, seated right here to my right—oh, yeah. Let me tell you what he said: "In spite of all the barriers I have encountered, I always hear my mother's voice saying, 'Le'Ron, keep reaching up.' And that is exactly what I plan to do." This fall, Le'Ron is returning to college to continue reaching toward his goal of becoming a paralegal. When he's not studying, he's an active volunteer in his community. Le'Ron Jackson is an example of how the ADA changes lives. He is a role model for all Americans with and without disabilities. Thank you for being here.

The ADA has given greater hope and dignity to countless Americans. Yet, our work is not complete. Too many individuals still find it difficult to pursue an education or own a home or hold a job. We must continue to

remove the artificial barriers to achievement that remain.

Last year, my administration unveiled the New Freedom Initiative, an effort to continue on the hopeful path of the ADA. This initiative gives people with disabilities increased access to new technologies for independent living, greater educational opportunities, better access to the workplace and community life.

For too many individuals with disabilities, inadequate transportation limits access to schools and churches and jobs, and this is one obstacle the New Freedom Initiative addresses. The 2003 budget I submitted provides \$145 million for alternative transportation and innovative transportation grants, so that people with disabilities can work and participate more actively in their communities. And I urge the Congress to fully fund my New Freedom Initiative budget requests.

And when Americans with disabilities participate in their communities, they should not be penalized. Today, Medicare recipients who are considered homebound may lose coverage if they occasionally go to a baseball game—which, of course, I encourage them to do—[laughter]—or meet with a friend or go to a family reunion. New technology is allowing even the most significantly disabled Americans to be more mobile. That's just a fact. And they should not be forced to trade their benefits for a little freedom. So today I announce we're clarifying Medicare policy, so people who are considered homebound can occasionally take part in their communities without fear of losing their benefits.

We're also determined to help people like Le'Ron to their full potential, by expanding educational opportunities. In both my budgets, I've asked for increases in special education grant funding of \$1 billion. These are the largest increases ever proposed. In addition, I created the Commission on Excellence and Special Education, to recommend policies to improve the educational performance of students with disabilities. The Commission provided excellent recommendations in its recent report. And I look forward to working with Congress, and I hope Congress will closely examine those findings when it considers the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

You know, when my father signed the ADA into law in 1990, he said, “We must not and will not rest until every man and woman with a dream has the means to achieve it.” Today we renew that commitment, and we continue to work for an America where individuals are celebrated for their abilities, not judged by their disabilities.

Again, I want to welcome you all here. I want to thank those who were pioneers in this landmark legislation for being here to celebrate this anniversary. I am now pleased to sign a proclamation in honor of the 12th anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Proclamation 7579—Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2002

July 26, 2002

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is one of the most compassionate and successful civil rights laws in American history. In the 12 years since President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA into law, more people with disabilities are participating fully in our society than ever before. As we mark this important anniversary, we celebrate the positive effect this landmark legislation has had upon our Nation, and we recognize the important influence it has had in improving employment opportunities, government services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications for those with disabilities.

Today, Americans with disabilities enjoy greatly improved access to countless facets of life; but more work needs to be done. We must continue to build on the important foundations established by the ADA. Too many Americans with disabilities remain isolated, dependent, and deprived of the tools they need to enjoy all that our Nation has to offer.

My Administration is committed to removing the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from realizing their full potential and achieving their dreams. The New Freedom Initiative, which I announced last year, builds on the hopeful path of the ADA. It provides Americans with disabilities increased access to assistive technologies, expands educational options, and increases opportunities for them to integrate into our workforce. We are committed to ensuring the delivery of vital services to disabled persons in an integrated, community-based setting.

My Administration will continue to enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act, and we will work with businesses and State and local governments to increase partnerships that promote the purposes of the ADA. Together, we are working for a day when all people with disabilities are able to live and work with dignity, freedom, and independence and realize their potential as fully integrated members of our society.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 26, 2002, as a day in celebration of the 12th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I call upon public officials, business leaders, people with disabilities, and all Americans to pursue the ADA’s full promise of equal opportunity and to celebrate the expanded freedom that the ADA has brought to American life.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:52 a.m., July 29, 2002]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on July 30.