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A Section

THE FEDERAL PAGE

ADA's 10th Anniversary Marked With Initiatives; Clinton Directs Agencies To
Hire More Disabled
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Marking the 10th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), President Clinton announced yesterday that he will issue an executive order calling on federal agencies to hire 100,000 people with disabilities over the next five years.

Clinton made his remarks at the granite memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt, lending the event a powerful symbolism as he evoked the president who, despite needing to use a wheelchair after a crippling bout of polio, gave the country the New Deal.

"We are all a freer and better country because of the Americans With Disabilities Act and what you have done," said Clinton, speaking under a gray drizzly sky to about 800 people, young and old, many in wheelchairs or with seeing-eye dogs.

As Clinton spoke, he nodded at **Marque Moore**, a 28-year-old student at the University of Texas who suffered a spinal cord injury after a bull-riding accident, acknowledging his help in drafting the executive order. A White House aide held an umbrella over Moore, who was in a wheelchair on stage, because he could not move his hands.

The landmark legislation was signed a decade ago by President George Bush. Highlighting the bipartisan nature of the ADA, Sens. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) also spoke at yesterday's event. In a moving gesture, Harkin, whose brother Frank was deaf and died a month ago, "signed" his opening remarks to the crowd.

"A lot of what the Americans With Disabilities Act is all about is making sure people can live like people, can do things that other folks take for granted," Clinton said. "The FDR Memorial is a pretty good place for us to be having this because, as all of you know, it is more than a monument to one of our nation's leaders; it's a symbol of who we are as a nation and what we can overcome."

Clinton noted that although the federal work force is the smallest in 40 years, he wants to ensure "that we're tapping the deepest pool of talent."

The percentage of people with disabilities hired by the federal executive branch has remained stable at about 7 percent over the past 20 years, according to the Office of Personnel Management. Today, out of a federal work force of 1.8 million, 122,000 people have disabilities. The figure does not count the U.S. Postal Service, Congress or the judicial branch.

Clinton accepted the "Spirit of ADA" torch from Justin Dart Jr., who is often called the "father of the ADA." Dart, an activist for five decades, also praised Clinton for supporting the sculpture of FDR in a wheelchair.

"Like Abraham Lincoln, Bill Clinton has fought to guarantee the rights of our citizens," said Dart, sitting in a wheelchair and wearing his trademark cowboy hat and boots. But Dart also warned that "millions of us are unemployed and poor, in nursing institutions. . . . The ADA is under attack. Mr. Clinton, we need your continuing leadership."

Clinton appeared with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who recounted how, in 1993, she had gone on a door-to-door canvass to find out why students were not in school. She learned that many children were kept out because they could not see or hear or had some other disability.

Beginning next year, she said, a new federal regulation will allow disabled students receiving Supplemental Security Income payments to exclude more earned income before their benefits are affected, from \$400 a month to \$1,290 a month.

"This is long overdue," she said. "Young people with disabilities should not have to pay the price for working."

The president announced other rule changes to encourage people receiving Social Security disability payments to work. Last year, the maximum limit on how much a person could earn without losing disability benefits was raised. Beginning next year, Clinton said, the earnings limit--currently \$700 a month--will be automatically adjusted each year based on the national average wage index.

The administration also is supporting bipartisan legislation to allow children with disabilities to continue their Medicaid coverage even after their parents have returned to work.

And Clinton announced a new Web site, www.disability.gov, as a one-stop electronic link for people with disabilities and their families on topics such as employment and civil rights protection.

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