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Full Participation For the World's Disabled Population

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DR. J. CLAY SMITH, JR.
ACTING CHAIRMAN
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
Before The
NATIONAL EMPLOY THE HANDICAPPED WEEK
October 5, 1981

Full Participation For the World's Disabled Population

Welcome to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission where we are embarking on our celebration of National Employ the Handicapped week. In this, the International year of Disabled Persons, we should also take this opportunity to reflect on problems of the handicapped in all spheres of the republic.

There are approximately 35 million disabled persons in the United States, or about 15% of the total population. The Department of Labor reports that there are 7.2 million severely disabled persons of working age, or about 6% of the national work force.

OPM's Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) indicates that in 1979 there were 134,026 disabled Federal employees, who comprised 6.4% of the total Federal non-postal work force.

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~~To us~~ at the EEOC, this is not just a week to listen to speeches and then return to business as usual. For here at the EEOC we have substantive responsibility for government-wide handicapped efforts. The EEOC in July, 1979, under the Civil Rights

2.

Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1978, became the Federal agency responsible for federal sector affirmative action planning. The EEOC is also responsible for hearings, the oversight of the processing of EEO complaints and appeals of agency decisions on EEO complaints, including handicap issues.

In that this is proclaimed by the President as National Employ the Handicapped Week, I will now read the presidential proclamation:

EXAMPLES

Proclamations

Proclamation 1:

Presidential 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons Proclamation

"We seek, in the 1980s, an era of national renewal, and era that will set loose again the energy and ingenuity of the American people.

"Today there are 35 million disabled Americans who represent one of our most underutilized national resources. Their will, their spirit, and their hearts are not impaired, despite their limitations. All of us stand to gain when those who are disabled share in America's opportunities.

"To increase the participation of disabled persons in our national life and in the lives of other nations the United Nations has designated 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons. America has long been a world leader in this area, and the United States Council for the International Year of Disabled Persons and our Federal government have already responded to the United Nations challenge. Programs are underway throughout the Nation.

"Through partnerships of disabled and nondisabled persons; of our private sector and our government; and of our national, state, and community organizations, we can expand the opportunities for disabled Americans to make a fuller contribution to our national life. I am proud to pledge the cooperation of my Administration and the Federal agencies under my jurisdiction, including the Federal Interagency Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons.

"NOW, THEREFORE, in keeping with the goals of the International Year, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons in the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord Nineteen hundred eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifth."