



*This time on Disability Nation --*

**Barack Obama:** But 17 years after Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act, America's leadership has faded. As President, I will restore it.

**Hillary Clinton:** Disability rights are civil rights. The right to be treated equally. They are human rights. The right of all people to fulfill their God-given potentials.

**John McCain:** The country has become more accessible for people with a broader array of abilities, who now have greater opportunities than ever before.

*-- presidential candidates on disability issues, changes to employment programs for people with disabilities, and the latest news next on Disability Nation, episode 56.*

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Hi, it's Larry, and you're listening to Disability Nation - an audio magazine by and for people with disabilities.

Well, how are you doing? It's Larry, your host, as always, and I thank you for tuning in and hope that everything's going okay for you. Busy time of year, I know, and if you're like me, you're interested in the political stuff going on. It's all over the news now. We're just past Super Tuesday and with that in mind, it's a good time to check out the candidates that are running to be your President and to find out a little bit about their positions on disability issues because they certainly do vary from candidate to candidate and party to party as we all know. So on this show we'll hear from Senator Barack Obama, Senator John McCain and Senator Hillary Clinton, and they'll talk a bit about their positions and thoughts about disability issues and what needs to happen over the next four years.

Got a busy show, so also on the program this time, we'll get the latest news provided by Inclusion Daily Express, and a lot's happening in the world of disability issues, so we'll cover that. And finally, you're probably familiar with the Ticket to Work Program and it's finally likely that some new rules and regulations for how that program operates will be coming out in the next few months, and so we'll kind of revisit a discussion we had

some time ago with Sue Suter, who is the Association Commissioner of Social Security programs and learn about that.

If you want to get in touch with me, there's a couple of ways to do that. You can visit the website which is [www.disabilitynation.net](http://www.disabilitynation.net), you can send e-mail to [contact@disabilitynation.net](mailto:contact@disabilitynation.net), and you can call the Disability Nation phone portal. That number is (480) 302-9300, where you can listen to past episodes of the show, listen to blog entries that I do, and also leave a message just by pressing 9.

Again, it's (480) 302-9300, and I have heard from a couple of people and I really appreciate it when you guys send e-mail and voice mail. It lets me know that you're listening, that you're interested in the topics that we're covering. So don't be shy. Go ahead and get in touch with me. I love to hear from you, and you never know, you just might hear yourself on the show. So sit back and enjoy the show and thanks for listening as always.

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*Here is a look at some of the things that happened in disability rights and advocacy news this week, as reported by Inclusion Daily Express, the international disability rights news service.*

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Officials with Portland's TriMet light rail system are trying to figure out why guide dogs are receiving electrical shocks from some station platforms. Patricia Kepler, a past president of Guide Dog Users of Oregon, told the Oregonian that last week her guide dog Reuben appeared to stumble when she brought him onto a MAX train. It turned out that Reuben had actually received four mild shocks when he stepped from the platform onto the train.

Other guide dog owners have complained recently about the same problem. Kepler explained that the shocks cause the dogs to become confused and disobey their owners - - a situation that can be hard on the dogs and dangerous for their owners. This is not the first time there have been problems with electricity on TriMet trains interfering with service dogs. Eight years ago, three dogs had to be retrained and another had to retire after they received shocks when they stepped onto wet tracks. Those problems were later corrected.

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More than a year after the states were supposed to have accessible voting systems in each polling place, the state of New York is still trying to decide what an accessible voting system is. Last week, the Board of Elections gave local elections officials a list of three optical scanner machines to choose from in order to comply with the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Soon afterward, however, the board cut the list down to one machine. That prompted lawsuits from the two manufacturers who were cut from the list, and from one company that makes touch-screen machines but failed to make the first list.

On Monday the state's Supreme Court ruled that the board must allow local polling places to select the touch-screen machines manufactured by Liberty Election Systems. Suits from the other companies that make optical scanner machines were pending. At stake are millions of dollars in revenues from precincts across the state. Some experts believe many local elections officials will choose accessible machines to replace all of the out-dated lever machines.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued New York in 2006 for failing to reach HAVA deadlines. One court-ordered deadline for selecting machines is coming up this Friday. New York is reportedly the only state that still has not complied with the federal law that Congress passed following the debacle of the 2000 General Elections. Under HAVA, each polling place is to be accessible to voters with disabilities, and include at least one voting system that allows them to independently cast a private ballot.

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On February 1, two women with intellectual disabilities walked into separate Baghdad pet markets, when bombs they wore exploded. While early news accounts reported that the two women were mentally disabled, some later reports specifically described them as having Down syndrome. The blasts killed at least 70 people -- the most in the capital city in nearly a year -- and wounded more than 100 others. Iraqi and American officials said the women appeared to have been sent to the animal markets by the terrorist group al-Qaeda in Iraq. They speculated that the women were probably chosen because they would not question those who sent them to their deaths, and because security personnel would not suspect them of carrying explosives. The officials could not confirm whether the women detonated the explosives themselves, or the bombs were blown up by remote control.

These are not the first reports of people with disabilities being used as weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan. Last April, a United Nations news service reported of dozens of instances where al-Qaeda in Iraq militants had kidnapped and recruited children with disabilities to carry out suicide bombings. In some cases, the children were reportedly told that sacrificing themselves would benefit their people and guarantee them a place in paradise. In other cases, the children's families reportedly sold them to the insurgents to fight the Iraqi government and occupation forces.

On Election Day in January 2005, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that a 19-year-old man with Down syndrome had been killed when insurgents apparently detonated explosives that they had strapped to his chest before they ordered him to walk toward a Baghdad polling place. The paper noted that there had been unconfirmed reports of insurgents attempting to use other people with Down syndrome in their attacks, but that they had been caught and stopped in time. Some officials in Afghanistan believe that a majority of suicide bombers recruited by the Taliban there had physical or mental disabilities.

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Students with disabilities in the U.S. have benefited from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and No Child Left Behind, with more graduating from high school and more reaching academic goals, according to a report the National Council on Disability released last week. The Council, which is an independent agency that advises the President on disability issues, commissioned the study to determine how the laws have affected student achievement, assessment systems, and personnel development, and what barriers remain for students with disabilities. The report concluded that the most important result of NCLB and IDEA appears to be that students with disabilities are no longer ignored or discounted. "People must pay attention to them now and work to make sure they have the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers," it said.

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Doctors, not families, have the final say when it comes to deciding whether life-sustaining treatment should be withdrawn from patients in Manitoba, Canada. Last Thursday, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba issued regulations to guide doctors across the province on what to do when families disagree with doctors that want to remove life support from patients. The rules, which govern all physicians in the province beginning February 1, state that life sustaining treatment should only be used to help the patient maintain or recover a level of cerebral function to "achieve awareness of self; and achieve awareness of environment; and experience his/her own existence."

"When restoring or maintaining health is not possible, the physician's primary goal becomes palliative care focused on patient comfort," the guidelines state. The guidelines are the first of their kind in Canada. They were published a month after the family of 84-year-old Sam Golubchuck took Grace Hospital to court to keep doctors there from removing his ventilator and feeding tube. Doctors had said that Golubchuk, an Orthodox Jew, was "brain dead" and that it was futile to keep him alive because he would not recover. They also argued that doctors -- not families, the patients, or the courts -- should determine when life support should be removed. Early last month, Golubchuk's family told reporters that he is alert and is showing signs of improvement.

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In a Civil Rights Directive issued January 31, 2008, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the federal agency that runs the national park system and other programs, announced that they will require that all audio-visual media must be open captioned and not closed captioned. They note also that "This in no way negates [their] responsibility to provide assistive listening devices for program participants who are hard of hearing." The Directive explains that they opted for open captioning because it "provides the most effective and efficient method of access... Even where close captioned media is available, it has been found that much staff time and effort is often taken to ensure that captioning is turned off and on in a timely manner for participants with disabilities ... switches may be easily broken or tampered with causing ... non-compliance."

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And, finally, a measure in the Wyoming House and Senate would have state documents rewritten to remove a number of terms that are considered outdated, and in some cases, offensive. The joint resolution would have the words "mental retardation" dropped from state documents, and replaced with the term "developmental disability". The advocacy group People First of Wyoming and other groups have been pushing for the change, which they say would better reflect the way today's society views and describes people with disabilities.

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*Expanded coverage of these stories, and links to dozens more disability rights news articles and resources, are available through our daily and weekly email updates at [www.InclusionDaily.com](http://www.InclusionDaily.com).*

*This has been Margie Zebell for Disability Nation.*

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Larry Wanger: "Vote as if your life depends upon it, because it does." That's a statement we hear a lot in the disability community and yet, the number of people with disabilities who vote continues to lag behind those without disabilities. With the presidential elections just a few short months away and the primary season well underway, I thought it would be a great time to take a listen to some of the comments made by candidates running for president where they summarize some of their positions around disability issues and issues important to the disability community.

First up, we'll hear from Illinois Senator, Barack Obama. There's a video that's on his website and circulating in other places where he talks about his disability platform. I'm going to play for you the audio from that video, and also you can check out the Disability Nation website to link to Obama's site where you can read more about his position on disability issues and other issues that might be important to you.

Barack Obama: I learned about the experience of living with disability from my father-in-law, Fraser Robinson. At the age of 30, Fraser was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. For the next 25 years, as his condition progressed, he carried out his responsibilities to his family with grace and dignity. My wife, Michelle, has told me about the hidden toll it took on her family, the added burden on her

mother, the complexity of planning even the smallest family outing to avoid the barriers they were sure to encounter, the uncertainty of the family's future.

Fraser's story reinforced some simple and indelible lessons that we must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes and discrimination; that policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities; and that every nation has a special responsibility to look after those who can't live on their own because everyone deserves to live with dignity and respect.

The U.S. should lead the world to achieve this vision, but 17 years after Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act, America's leadership has faded. As President, I will restore it. We'll start by ratifying the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but we also have work to do here at home.

First, we must provide Americans with disabilities the educational opportunities they deserve, which is why I support full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and expanding college opportunities for students with disabilities. We can't wait until children arrive at the schoolhouse door. We should screen all infants for the full array of potential impairments and set a national goal to re-screen all two-year-olds. Some conditions, like autism, don't appear until age two. So infant screening is not enough, and to meet the needs of the growing numbers of Americans with autism, we need a comprehensive approach that includes not just screening, but early intervention, research, and education services.

Second, we must end workplace discrimination, something I've fought against as a former civil rights lawyer. I strongly support the ADA Restoration Act to overturn those Supreme Court decisions that wrongly narrowed the ADA, and my administration will lead the way by hiring more federal employees with disabilities and encouraging private sector companies to do the same.

Moreover, if we're serious about bringing more Americans with disabilities into the workplace, we need to sign universal healthcare into law, which is what I'll do by the end of my first term. And with the growing number of veterans returning with combat stress disorders and traumatic brain injuries, we should ensure that we are providing the resources to address these conditions.

Finally, we must support independent community based living for everyone who chooses it. That's why I'm proud to support the Community Choice and Class Acts, and it's why I will expand access to assisted technology as president. Together, we can build a world that's just and inclusive for all. Thank you.

Larry Wanger: Next, we'll hear from Senator Hillary Clinton and a portion of a presentation that she gave at the Disability Presidential Candidates Forum that was held in New Hampshire back in November.

Hillary Clinton: Disability rights are civil rights - the right to be treated equally. They are human rights. The right of all people to fulfill their God-given potentials, and they are an urgent issue for America because America will never achieve our full potential until all Americans can achieve theirs.

Now, obviously we have come a long way in this country, but we have our work cut out for us if we're going to keep the promise that we should that we will continue to work toward a more perfect union that includes all Americans. For the past seven years, it's as though people with disabilities have been invisible to this President and his administration. If you're a child who can't get the special education classes you need, you're invisible. If you're a citizen who wants to vote but the polling place doesn't have the right equipment or the right help, you're invisible. If you're a worker who wants a job, but you can't find one that accommodates your disability, you're invisible, too. Well, people with disabilities may be invisible to George Bush, but they are not invisible to you and they will never be invisible to me.

This is a cause that I have been involved with for 35 years. My first job out of law school was with the Children's Defense Fund. I was assigned to go to New Bedford, Massachusetts, as part of a nationwide effort to understand why so many children were not enrolled in school. Knocking on those doors was an eye-opening and heartbreaking experience. I found children who weren't in school because of physical disabilities like blindness and deafness. On a small back porch off her family's home, I met a girl in wheelchair who told me how much she wanted to go to school, but she knew she couldn't go simply because she couldn't walk. These children were kept home because the schools couldn't and wouldn't accommodate them. I knew then that I wanted to spend my life fighting to be a voice for children who were left out and left behind. I wanted to give them the same opportunities I had growing up.

The Children's Defense Fund submitted our results to the Congress and with the help of strong leaders like Senator Kennedy and all of

you who are advocates, it led to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, mandating that children with physical, emotional and learning disabilities be educated in the public school system. In the Senate, I have also worked to pass the Community Choice Act. I've aggressively fought to investigate the linkages between environmental toxins and disabilities, and I have strongly supported the ADA Restoration Act.

Larry Wanger: And finally, we'll hear from Senator John McCain, also a portion of a presentation he gave by phone to the Disability Presidential Forum in New Hampshire.

John McCain: My friends, you know America is built on the pursuit of individual dreams, and its greatness stems from the freedoms who have been hard-won and constitute the core of our values. Those with disabilities are no less entitled to those freedoms. You know, the private ballot is an important part of those freedoms and we got a bill in 1998 to ensure that persons with disabilities could get into polling places and vote in private. That bill became a part of the disability provisions that eventually ended up in the Help America Vote Act. I'm particularly concerned today that we honor our commitment to the veterans who have fought for this country. They are the finest generation and the care of those wounded in battle should be nothing less than the best. Our veterans' healthcare is not what we want to be, to say the least. The Walter Reed scandal that was uncovered by the media was a disgrace.

I just want to finally add a couple more points very briefly. The problem with healthcare in America is not the quality of healthcare; we have to reform the way we spend money and the dollar -- the healthcare dollar is spent in hospitals and nursing homes in other institutions, we can provide better care and lower cost by utilizing preventative methods that can keep our citizens in their homes. We must reward coordinated care and care management programs that provide superior care for chronic conditions. Those conditions are central to the rising costs.

In addition, we can aggressively reform insurance markets, drug laws and medical regulations to ensure vigorous competition that delivers insurance, drugs and other therapies to Americans in the more convenient settings and at lower costs.

I want to thank you for your advocacy for our citizens who are amongst our finest and greatest citizens. I want to thank you for providing an opportunity for every American to go just as far as their ambitions will take them. Some of the greatest love and affection that I've been honored to have in my life is by Americans

who have overcome great challenges and since the Americans with Disability Act was enacted, many Americans have responded positively and creatively.

The country has become more accessible for people with a broader array of abilities now have greater opportunities than ever before. We obviously need to continue. We need to make sure that the ADA is enforced everywhere in America. We need to see where there needs to be additional improvements and changes made. That's why you are doing what your doing right here where you are. That's because you are serving a cause far, far greater than your self interest. Thank you and God bless.

*Just a reminder that you can get more information about the candidates and links to their respective websites by visiting [www.disabilitynation.net](http://www.disabilitynation.net).*

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**Larry Wanger:** Back in 1999, then President Bill Clinton signed into law the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. Part of that program is obviously the Ticket to Work. Since being launched back in 2001, the Ticket to Work has faced a number of challenges, but new regulations expected to be approved in the next couple of months may significantly change that.

Sue Suter is Associate Commissioner of Employment Programs for the Social Security Administration and joined me to talk about some of the upcoming changes to the Ticket to Work Program. Sue, as the Associate Commissioner, you oversee the Ticket to Work Program. To start, can you tell listeners a little bit about that program?

**Sue Suter:** I'd be happy to. Legislation was passed by Congress in 1999 that authorized the Ticket program, and it's actually was -- legislation was authorized with the idea from Congress, from public policy people and disability organizations and advocates -- they're a lot of people with disabilities who would really like to work given the opportunity and given a level playing field. So the Ticket to Work Program is if you're a Social Security beneficiary, either on SSI or disability insurance, SSDI, and you're between the ages of 18 and 65, you are eligible for a ticket, and we send you a ticket in the mail. It's a totally free and voluntary program, and what the person can do when they receive the ticket is they can use it with a local service provider, which we call and employment network, or a state vocational rehabilitation agency, and they can use that ticket, turn the ticket in to get services that they may need to become prepared to get a job and then get a job.

Larry Wanger: A lot of people think that they're on SSI or SSDI, Social Security benefits, that they're not allowed to work. Things sound different now. Has Social Security changed its approach to this concept?

Sue Suter: Yes, we have. And actually, we have new regulations in the Ticket program that employment networks and beneficiaries and disability organizations are quite anxious for us to get -- to publish and make final, and under the new regs, we think we can accomplish a couple of things. And I think, Larry, actually I was out a couple of months ago and heard from a beneficiary, one of our individuals who is a beneficiary who has just started to work, and she said it very well. She said that everybody knows that you can't make a living on benefits alone, and in the -- for someone who is a beneficiary, it's difficult because, unfortunately, in our public policy, we ask somebody to prove that they can't work if they have a disability in order to get benefits. And we understand that cash benefit and health insurance are very, very important to individuals. That's a very important safety net. So it's a little scary for beneficiaries to try work and to wonder if any way that's going to impact on their receiving their benefits and their healthcare.

So what we're saying in the Ticket to Work Program, which I think is a little different, is that there needs to be a mix of benefit payments and earnings. And what really the essential part of the Ticket to Work Program is we're just saying to folks, "Just try work." It might be part time at the very beginning. We've also learned that individuals, they decide to go back to work -- it's not a linear kind of thing. I mean, they may decide, "I'll check out the Ticket program. I'll learn more about it." And then a month or two later, they may decide to call the number, or they may decide to talk to someone on the community level, and I could talk about who that could be.

In the community level, to find out more about the program, in some individuals, it's like sticking your toe in the water. They just want to have an opportunity to try it without losing their benefits and that's the point of the Ticket program. They can try working part time. They can try several hours a week, and they will not lose their benefits. At the same time, though, they're moving towards more self sufficiency and going to work full time.

Larry Wanger: So in the short term, Social Security is giving people the opportunity to work part time through the Ticket program, but long term, the goal of the Ticket program remains to help people transition off of benefits and to become self sufficient through employment.

Sue Suter: Yes, because it -- move to more full time employment, which makes the quality of life, again to quote the woman that I heard a couple of months ago, "Being on benefits alone, really is not enough for most people to make a good living." And so, we're saying, "Try the ticket program. While you're trying the program, you're not going to lose your benefits with the idea that as you become more self sufficient, and earn more money, eventually you could go off the Social Security roles.

Larry Wanger: How can people get more information about the Ticket program?

Sue Suter: People can go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work) and they can learn about the Ticket program and they can also earn about the benefits planners that are in their community. They can also call the local Social Security office and get information. We have what we call a program manager, and her name is Maximus, and Maximus works with us and Social Security to administer the program on a day to day basis and the person could also call that number at 866-968-7842, and that's Maximus and also the Ticket to Work Program.

Larry Wanger: For links and more information about the Ticket to Work Program, be sure to stop by the Disability Nation website at [www.disabilitynation.net](http://www.disabilitynation.net), and thanks for listening this week.

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