National Disability Employment Awareness Month: Fact Sheet

Updated October 13, 2023
Introduction
National Disability Employment Awareness Month is observed annually in October. It celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities to America’s workplaces and the economy, and “reaffirms the commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens.” Each year, the month is celebrated with a theme chosen by the U.S. Department of Labor. For 2023, the theme is “Advancing Access and Equity,” which will be an opportunity to celebrate the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the impacts of that legislation to address access and equity for people with disabilities.

History and Legislation
As a precursor to National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), in 1945, Congress established “the first week in October of each year as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week” (Public Law 176, 79th Congress). In 1962, to bring more attention to those with all types of disabilities, Congress dropped the word “Physically” through the adoption of P.L. 91-442, resulting in the condensed National Employ the Handicapped Week. More recently, in 1988, P.L. 100-630 expanded the commemoration to a month and altered its name to the current National Disability Employment Awareness Month. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is codified at 36 U.S.C. §121.

Related CRS Reports
CRS has prepared reports that explain or address working with a disability. Some of these include the following:

- CRS In Focus IF10506, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), by William R. Morton
- CRS Report R43255, The Mental Health Workforce: A Primer, by Elayne J. Heisler
- CRS Report R43468, Special Minimum Wages for Workers with Disabilities: Frequently Asked Questions, by Benjamin Collins

CRS also has a report on the process of observing commemorative days, weeks, and months:

- CRS Report R44431, Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice, 113th to 115th Congress, by Jacob R. Straus

Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions
Members of Congress can make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the Congressional Record to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples that may be of assistance in preparing such statements.


**Presidential Proclamations**

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. The law requests that the President issue a proclamation each year. Some recent NDEAM proclamations, from the Compilation of Presidential Documents, include the following:

- Presidential Proclamations—Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (2021-)
- Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017-2021)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the GovInfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Statistics**

U.S. Census Bureau, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month: October 2023.”


U.S. Census Bureau, “Disability Data.”


**Educational, Cultural, and Advocacy Organizations and Resources**

Numerous government agencies and nongovernmental organizations provide information on and promote advocacy for the disabled. Some of these organizations include the following:


Library of Congress, “National Disability Employment Month: A Commemorative Observances Legal Research Guide.” Provides links to legislative branch and executive branch primary resource historical documents. These documents formulated and impacted the current commemorative month, as well as preceding observances for the working disabled.


American Bar Association, “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.” Workplace rights and examples of resources for disabled worker opportunities.

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