



Podcast Transcript

“Increasing Access and Opportunity: 30 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act”

Recorded: June 5, 2020

Moderator: Connecticut State Representative Christie Carpino, WIG Board Member-Eastern Regional Director

Panelists: Illinois State Senator, Julie Morrison, Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee and Founder of the Special Needs Caucus
Bobby Silverstein J.D., Principal, Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, PC and Legislative Counsel, State Exchange on Employment and Disability or (SEED).
Nadia Mossburg, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

Voiceover: Welcome to the Women In Government Podcast. Whether discussing important issues or policies of the day, this is the place where lawmakers and decision-makers unite to get the conversation started.

Representative Carpino: This July 26th marks the 30th anniversary of a landmark decision that changed the lives of people living with disabilities. In 1990, the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), or ADA, was passed and signed into law. It effectively prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life.

Hi, I’m Connecticut State Representative Christie Carpino. Thank you for listening to the latest Women In Government Podcast: “Increasing Access & Opportunity: 30 Years of the ADA.” We’ve come a long way from the dark days of people being viewed as “less than whole” or in need of “fixing.” However, there’s still plenty of work that needs to be done to ensure equal opportunity for employment, education, and public access for those with a disability.

Joining in on the conversation:

Illinois State Senator Julie Morrison. Senator Morrison is Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee and founder of the Special Needs Caucus. She passed a package of proposals to help break down barriers people with disabilities face nowadays.

Senator Morrison: So nice to be with you.

Representative Carpino: We also have Bobby Silverstein, a Washington DC-based attorney and team member of the [State Exchange on Employment and Disability—the SEED Project](#). In his capacity as the former Staff Director and Chief Counsel to the Senate Subcommittee on Disability Policy, he served as a behind-the-scenes architect of the ADA.

Bobby Silverstein: Glad to join you.



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Representative Carpino: Nadia Mossburg is also joining us. Ms. Mossburg is senior policy advisor with the [U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy](#). She too is a member of SEED.

Nadia Mossburg: Good morning, Representative Carpino.

Representative Carpino: I also want to take a moment to thank everyone who is listening and remind you to like or share our podcast. You can also email us by visiting womeningovernment.org.

Before 1990, it was a harsh world for many people with disabilities. It’s difficult to even look back and remember how they were often excluded or isolated based on something called “ugly laws,” barring people with physical disabilities from being seen in public. Although we’re celebrating 30 years of equality, we can’t forget the grim statistics that remain – the University of New Hampshire (my alma mater) Institute on Disability found in 2019 that the overall employment gap in the U.S. between those with disability and those without is more than 40%. When we examine overall salaries, the gaps don’t look any better. On the low-side, we see a gap of \$2,200 in Louisiana. On the high-side, there’s a whopping gap of more than \$20,000 dollars in Washington D.C. Today we’re going to discuss where we were, where we are, and all the positive places we hope to go while making life even better for those living with or loving someone with a disability.

Bobby, you were there from the beginning. Why do you think Congress was able to pass and President George H.W. Bush was able to sign the ADA into law in 1990?

Bobby Silverstein: Well from a policymaker’s point of view, this was like a dream scenario. You had incredible leadership and profiles in courage from Democrats and Republicans. So, bipartisanship in trust was the major factor. Starting from President Bush through Bob Dole—Republican Minority Leader—you had Senator Harkin, Senator Kennedy, Senator Orrin Hatch—Republican from Utah. So, it was this bipartisanship and leadership from the top. You also had an interesting thing that the major proponents of the legislation, the disability community, was incredibly cohesive. There was a strong coalition of groups and they were able to make a compelling case. And then the stakeholders—the state and local governments and the leadership around the country—expressed strong support for this civil rights statute recognizing the need. And then many in the business community from the Chamber of Commerce to SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, said yes, we need a civil rights statute. They recognized the problems, but they also wanted to ensure that the concerns from the business community were addressed. So, this group of folks from the policymakers to the disability community to the stakeholders all recognized pragmatism was important to balance the rights of people with disabilities with the legitimate concerns of the state and local governments and with the private sector.

Representative Carpino: Bobby, that sounds like a perfect environment to make policy. Do you think the ADA would pass today in today’s environment?



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Bobby Silverstein: No, I think at the federal level, we do not have the bipartisan entrust that would be necessary. In contrast, I think you would agree with me, at the state level, disability policy is still often bipartisan and there are these tremendous opportunities that are opened up by the 30th anniversary for real important action by state policymakers to the make the ADA promise a reality.

Representative Carpino: I agree with you one-hundred percent. The states are far more nimble, far more bipartisan, at least at home in Connecticut, and we have the opportunity to make progress, particularly in situations like this. The Americans with Disabilities Act was a milestone for people with disabilities for many reasons. What is the primary message and significance of the ADA?

Bobby Silverstein: To me, it goes back to where we were as a nation historically, and because of the ADA, where we are now. There was really a fundamental change in how society views people with disabilities. In your introduction, you made a certain reference to the old approach of people with disabilities which focused on things like pity, looking at people with disabilities as incapable, defective, and in need of fixing. As a result of those presets, many policymakers were fine historically at the federal and state level with exclusion, segregation, and isolation of people with disabilities. But with the ADA, there was a fundamental paradigm shift. The new core value is a simple phrase that is included in the legislation: that disability is a natural and normal part of the human experience that should in no way diminish a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of society. So, what that means is that we need to treat people with dignity and respect. We need to focus on individual strengths and capabilities. We need to embrace and celebrate differences and foster empowerment and self-determination. And in addition to these attitudinal changes, we need to fix the physical barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating, whether they be building of facilities, whether they be transportation or communication barriers.

Representative Carpino: You couldn’t have said it better—dignity and respect. Bobby, rewinding the clock must bring back so many memories. You were there for the momentous moment. Can you share a personal story with us?

Bobby Silverstein: Sure. This was a pretty emotional experience for me to have had the opportunity to work first-hand with my boss, Senator Tom Harkin who is a Democrat from Iowa. Let me just tell you a couple of stories. One was before it all started, when Senator Harkin was told by Senator Kennedy that he would be the chief sponsor of the ADA. He had a group meeting of all his staff, and I can remember this like it happened yesterday, where one person who had been with Senator Harkin for many years said, “Tom, be very careful when you sponsor this bill. You can’t go too far. You can’t be too progressive on this because no Democrat running for Senator in the state of Iowa had ever been reelected.” And Senator Harkin who has a brother who is deaf, turned red, with his finger was just looking at this person furious and said, “Do not ever say this to me again. I ran for Senate not to be reelected. I understand discrimination first-hand. We will do whatever is necessary.” And that’s the way he was for the entire time.



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When we were on the Senate floor for final passage, he was the floor manager, and he did something else historic. He debated a bill without words. He used sign language only as a message to his brother. And finally, he made a dedication. I hope I can get through some of this because every time I read this I get emotional, because he made a dedication to the next generation of folks born with disabilities, and he dedicated the ADA to this ADA generation. With the passage of the ADA he said,

“We as a society make a pledge that every child with a disability will have the opportunity to maximize his or her potential to live proud, productive, and prosperous lives in the mainstream. We love you all and welcome you into the world. We look forward to being your friends, neighbors, and coworkers. We say whatever you decide is your goal, go for it. The doors are open and the barriers are coming down.”

That’s what the ADA is all about as reflected, and I had the privilege and opportunity to be on the Senate floor when this dedication was written.

Representative Carpino: One of the biggest highlights of the ADA must be the historic role it had in busting down barriers to employment, public services, and telecommunications. I’d like to bring Nadia into the conversation. You’re with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy. As a person with disability, can you share a personal perspective of telework?

Nadia Mossburg: Thank you. As a self-proclaimed introvert, one would think I love telework. But the reality is I have a little bit of a love-hate relationship with telework. I don’t drive, and I often rely on public transportation and paratransit to get around. So, the thought of not having to navigate the crowded train station or being stuck in hours of traffic definitely has its appeal. But it was a difficult transition for me to make to full-time telework because in more than 20 years of professional experience, so much of my time and energy has been spent helping break down barriers and negative stereotypes of people with disabilities in the workplace. In some respects, the move to full-time telework made me feel like I failed to prove that I had the skills, talents, and abilities to work in an integrated setting, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Psychologically, I had to shift my thinking and remember that I was only one of two employees at the time who were given permission to telework on a full-time basis.

When the office shifted to full-time telework for all the employees a few months ago, I was asked along with several other employees to share my effective strategies with telework, as I have had some extra time to think about my experience teleworking. I have realized that it has strengthened my communication skills and those of my team, given me a deeper appreciation for challenges that states face, and allowed me to focus on what matters most to me, and that is the relationship with my team and helping to remove barriers for people with disabilities. But I acknowledge that telework is not for everyone, and not everyone has the same reasons for telework. I know that for some people telework is necessary because they have difficulty concentrating and they need a quiet place, or they need extra time to take care of their medical needs, or they are concerned about getting sick from COVID-19 or



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other airborne illnesses. Not everyone finds telework helpful or useful though. As with any accommodation, an interactive process is necessary when considering it as an option.

Representative Carpino: Thank you, Nadia, and I believe that is key. You make a very important point that everybody is an individual, and there is no one size that fits all solutions to making the work environment productive for an individual. I do think we can all agree that employment is important and the most direct way to empower people with disabilities to achieve independence and economic self-sufficiency. That’s why we must ensure an equal playing field for everyone in the labor field. Nadia, can you discuss employment supports and examples of policies to promote successful remote workplace accommodations?

Nadia Mossburg: First, let me describe what employment supports are. Employment supports are those elements that allow someone to find and maintain employment, but not the job itself. And if you think about it, we all need some degree of employment supports to live and fully engage in our communities. Part of that engagement includes employment: transportation to get to work, technology on the job, supplies and equipment in the workplace to perform the essential functions of our jobs. For most people with disabilities, some of those supports may look a little bit different. As I mentioned earlier some people may need an accommodation—a quieter space to work, perhaps. Someone may need a screen reader or voice recognition software or other assistant technology to access the computer. Someone else may need clearly written instructions to ensure that they are able to understand what needs to be done.

[The Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#) within the US Department of Labor has a number of resources on accommodations and telework. As a federal agency that is non-regulatory, ODEP promotes policies and agreements with employers at all levels of government to increase the workplace success of people with disabilities. Some of our notable resources on accommodations and telework include the [Accommodations Webpage](#) which provides an overview of reasonable accommodations under the ADA and provides examples.

We also have recently updated our website with coronavirus informational resources that links to other federal guidance and resources on COVID-19 and the employment of people with disabilities. Lastly, there is a [Workplace Flexibility Toolkit](#) that provides information to employees, employers, policymakers, and researchers related to time, place, and task and highlights workplace flexibility strategies related to ODEP’s customized research-based data. There are also some additional resources available from our [Technical Assistance Center](#) which offer free services and resources in support of both employers and those with disabilities. For more information, I would encourage listeners to visit ODEP’s website at: www.dol.gov/odep

Representative Carpino: Thank you! There is definitely a wide spectrum amongst the states. As Bobby mentioned earlier, one of the guiding principles of the ADA is that disability is a natural and normal part of the human experience that in no way diminishes a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of



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society. I know we touched on this a little bit earlier, but can you address the importance of empowering a workforce inclusive of people with disabilities?

Nadia Mossburg: One of the key things that I have been thinking about, as states and local governments are thinking about and preparing for the future, is that it is vital to leverage the skills and talents of every person, including those with disabilities. But as you know, strong state and local government economies mean a strong American economy and one that is able to remain competitive globally. A workforce that is inclusive of people with disabilities—that includes people who are born with disabilities, become ill or injured on the job or in the workplace, veterans with disabilities, and the aging population—demonstrates its ability to account for a diverse range of needs and perspectives. This in turn allows both employers and companies to better meet the needs of customers.

Representative Carpino: Ever since that hot summer day in late July of 1990, state and local policymakers have had the opportunity to impact the lives of their constituents with disabilities by ensuring that policies being developed are inclusive.

Illinois State Senator Julie Morrison is someone who is making a positive impact. Senator Morrison has successfully gotten a package of proposals signed into law aimed at increasing state employment of individuals with disabilities. She’s quoted as saying “Having a job means having dignity, independence and purpose, regardless of whether or not an individual has a disability.” Senator, can you tell us about your Senate bills and how they will help people with disabilities living in your state?

Senator Morrison: Certainly. I want to tell you a little background on how we actually came to develop this legislation because I think it’s helpful for other legislators to maybe relate to it. Myself and colleagues in the General Assembly created a Special Needs Caucus. It was comprised of members of both parties and both houses. To qualify, you simply needed to have an interest in assisting people who have special needs to have a more full, productive, inclusive life. We found that in Illinois initially there was tremendous interest in this. Through discussions with stakeholders and legislators across the state, it became apparent that there were a couple of very straightforward ways that we could immediately assist. And as one of the previous speakers mentioned, nimble is a good word. State government does tend to be more nimble than federal government, usually.

The first piece of legislation I want to tell you about is [SB 1136](#). Basically, what this did was it required the Department of Central Management Services to conduct an annual presentation about what state hiring programs are available for persons with disabilities and required state agencies to send at least one person to attend the department’s presentation. What are we presently doing now? What is already in place? But are those things being taken advantage of? We found that these presentations and this information were available but that they weren’t being widely attended and the information wasn’t being well-circulated. This was a very straightforward, no-cost way to advance ADA in a state. So, I would say, sometimes we need to look at the most basic, straightforward ways of advancing.



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The other bill I would like to talk to you about this morning was [SB 726](#), and this created a disabled persons trainee program in all state agencies that had more than 1,500 employees. It also allowed and encouraged our constitutional officers, like our Governor, our Treasurer, our Comptroller, our Secretary of State, to participate, even though they wouldn't have that many employees. The trainee program would be administered by the [Department of Central Management Services](#), and that is the state agency in Illinois that does hiring and is basically our HR arm if you would. The trainee program was to last for 6 months, and it also required that the trainee worked a minimum of 20 hours a week. We wanted to give the trainee a real, honest taste of what work would look like, what that position required. I think sometimes we tend to sort of dummy-down jobs and work opportunities for people who have special needs or a disability when in fact, that is the opposite of what we should be doing. We should be empowering them and giving them the tools that they need to be successful.

CMS would place the disabled person in an appropriate job code. In other words, we weren't making something up. This was a job already in place in state government. Upon 6 months of completion of this trainee internship, this trainee would then be exempt from taking inner-required testing and this would put the person on the successful disabilities program hiring list. In other words, we now ask everyone, regardless of ability of disability, to take a written test. And if you have worked with folks who do have special challenges and special needs, you know that's patently unfair and discriminatory in so many ways. This, we felt, was an opportunity, a work-around, to actually let the applicants perform and demonstrate their ability to do the job. So, this internship program, I think, has tremendous potential, and I'm really looking forward to seeing it roll out in the next few months.

Representative Carpino: Can you explain why it's important for states to address employment of people with disabilities?

Senator Morrison: The states, along with local governments, are playing a vital role in building a strong and inclusive workforce to ensure that our whole nation's labor force can respond to global challenges. We need to remain competitive, and we need to leverage the skills and talents of all constituents, and that includes individuals with disabilities. In that spirit, it's critical for policymakers—state, local, and federal—to create accessible and inclusive environments that promote greater workforce participation and employment success for everybody, especially people with disabilities, including veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Representative Carpino: In an effort to help state and local governments develop and implement meaningful policies and best practices that lead to more employment opportunities for people with disabilities, state intermediary organizations—one being Women In Government—have teamed up to create the [State Exchange on Employment and Disability or \(SEED\)](#). I think it's safe to say the Americans with Disabilities Act laid the groundwork for inclusive policy, but there is more that needs to be done.

Bobby, can you tell us about SEED's policy checklist and some of the other materials? I understand it serves as a resource for state and local government leaders like myself when designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies.



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Bobby Silverstein: We talked earlier the old paradigm that treated people with the effect of “in need of fixing” versus the new paradigm where disabilities are a natural and normal part of the human experience. So, what SEED did was took that basic new paradigm and developed a checklist for state policymakers, starting with statement of finding, statement of purpose and policy that are typically in legislation, and the key requirements. Not only do we want to have some core requirements for policies that affect people with disabilities but implementation. So, how do you make sure that the administrative methods and strategies to ensure implementation occur? We developed this checklist so that when you are developing public policy based on the new paradigm, you and your staff and the legislative council will have a guide for designing new public policy that addresses the needs of people with disabilities.

Nadia Mossburg: One of the other things I think it does is remove some of the fear of the daunting task of considering writing policy that is inclusive for a state policymaker who may not have any experience with but is interested in writing an inclusive policy. This actually walks them through the process, providing points to consider to make sure that everything is covered and nothing is left as a loose end.

Representative Carpino: According to the CDC, 61 million adults in the United States are living with a disability. That’s 1 in 4. That makes the work policymakers and industry leaders are doing even more important during this 30-year milestone. SEED has been hard at work on creating resources to help states recognize and celebrate the ADA all year long. The central theme, “Increasing Access and Opportunity,” says it all. Can you elaborate a bit on what the Work Matters Policy Framework entails?

Bobby Silverstein: Sure. What happened was a bunch of state policymakers got together in 2015 and 2016 and they said, we want to share lessons learned from our colleagues. So, they put together a report called [Work Matters](#) which includes probably 250 examples of what states have done to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities, ranging from state as a model employer, to private sector involvement, to transition for youth, to disability owned businesses, accessible transition, stay at work, return to work—these were the major topics.

This framework is for basically any state policymaker who says, I want to do something, I want to do something on fast track hiring authority, and I don’t want to start from scratch. Well, instead of reinventing the wheel, here is this document that provides a starting point to policy options. And, Senator Morrison’s bill is a perfect example of Work Matters having different policy options. She actually developed legislation that is now being shared with other states as an example of a policy option giving those with disabilities other opportunities. Now, I’d like to share with you that this document was done in 2016, but every month we update that document. We know every bill that has been introduced and enacted up through May of 2020 that deals with any topic dealing with disability employment policy.

If you want to take action, the SEED project has the resources and has the knowledge base to be able to give you examples of options that other states have adopted.



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Representative Carpino: We cited a few statistics at the beginning of this podcast, and I have to tell you that the numbers were far from glowing. Despite all the progress since the passage of the ADA, people with disabilities still experience unemployment and underemployment rates far above the national average. How can we use the Emerging Disability Policy Framework to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the workforce?

Bobby Silverstein: I just want to emphasize again that the Disability Policy Framework is a perfect lens, a guidepost, a checklist - to enhance, enable, and facilitate the development of public policy. We have experience. We have states that have done this before. This framework just puts it in an easy form so that if a state policymaker is not sure what to do, here is a place to start.

Senator Morrison: Bobby, this is Senator Morrison, and you could not have hit the nail on the head more clearly for me. I am not an expert in disability law, nor had I even done a lot in legislation, but this framework provided what I needed and what my legal staff and drafting team needed to be able to come up with something that would be viable and would work in our state, and now I believe in other states as well. So, you are absolutely right. This should encourage legislators who care and want to take action but aren't exactly sure how. Here is their guidepost.

Bobby Silverstein: And, you know, I have been doing this for 50 years now, and I use this checklist every time I get a request for policy guidance from a state. I still use this checklist to make sure that we are addressing the various issues from a disability perspective.

Nadia Mossburg: As a person with a disability and as a policymaker myself, I want to also bring up the importance that this checklist is not meant to replace involving people with disabilities in the policymaking process. I would encourage policymakers as they are considering legislation to talk with the disability community in their state. It's important that people with disabilities have a seat at the table and a voice in the conversation.

Representative Carpino: Words matter. Prior to the enactment of the ADA, people with disabilities were called names and unfairly segregated and denied equal opportunity. With the 30th anniversary upon us, it's time for officials to be very loud and clear with their words. There's an official proclamation recognizing the three decades of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Can you tell us a bit about it?

Senator Morrison: This is an opportunity for all of us across the nation to sort of link arms to announce very loudly and very proudly the progress we have made, but also to address the needs that are still so blatantly unfilled. This is a proclamation to recommit to reduce barriers. This is a time for us to reengage stakeholders, to reengage the community that the ADA serves, and to really open and expand the communication line that while they have been in place 30 years, can definitely be improved.

Representative Carpino: How else can state policymakers recognize and celebrate the ADA all year, and use it as a platform to elevate National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October?



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Senator Morrison: I think that every state in the nation should have its own proclamation. I also believe this is a wonderful opportunity for legislators to introduce legislation, whether it be modeled on things that I’ve done or other states. And, October has been named National Disability Employment Awareness Month. What better time to work as a nation as individual states to highlight the work that has been done and the opportunities that exist?

I believe that states should lead by example. We so often ask corporate business, large employers, small employers - why aren’t you hiring people who have disabilities? What are the barriers? Why isn’t this happening more? The states need to lead by example. We are big employers, generally. That is why this internship program rings true. When we can demonstrate and show businesses, large and small, the ability that people with disabilities have and how they can be integrated into already existing jobs, I think we do the work we are meant to.

I would also like to remind everybody that October will be a time when across the nation, many folks will be voting. There are a lot of early voting opportunities. People with disabilities should have the opportunity, the right, and easy and healthy access to a ballot. So, I believe states that do have early voting, that have voting by mail opportunities, that have curbside voting - these are all things that states should be highlighting and talking about. COVID-19 has turned the basket upside-down for us in so many ways. But, nothing is more important during our election cycle than providing safe and accessible polling, and that includes all of our friends who have special needs and disabilities.

Representative Carpino: As we wrap up, it would be very remiss of us to not discuss these uncertain times. COVID-19 has been the latest and perhaps greatest gamechanger we’ve seen in a long time.

Nadia Mossburg: As I mentioned earlier, ODEP has a [webpage devoted to COVID-19](#) information and resources. The Office of Disabilities Employment Policy as well as the Department of Labor are working diligently to ensure the health and safety and rights of people with disabilities during this unprecedented time to make sure that they are part of the recovery. On our webpage, there are a number of references to federal guidance and resources on COVID-19 that relate to both people with disabilities and employers, so I encourage everyone to visit our website.

Representative Carpino: Now, I’d like to provide some time for closing remarks - perhaps on where you’d like to see the future of the ADA go? Senator Morrison, we can start with you.

Senator Morrison: We need to have an opportunity for states and local governments to step forward to actually put into play the strong framework that the ADA has provided to us. We need to be more engaging with the community that we serve, and that means having conversations, one-on-one or in groups. It does no good for someone to sit in a Capitol office and declare what they think is in the best interest of a person with special needs or a disability. At the same time, we need to link employers into those conversations. I think this is a starting point, and I hope that this anniversary is a first step in opening and expanding employment, because that is absolutely paramount and key for persons with disabilities. It provides access to greater health insurance opportunities. It provides greater inclusion,



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better inclusion, I could go down the list. That is my hope for this year as we celebrate the 30th anniversary.

Representative Carpino: Bobby, any final thoughts?

Bobby Silverstein: Just to again share with you the resources that SEED—the State Exchange on Employment & Disability—offers to state policymakers. SEED doesn’t have answers, but they do have options. If you want to do a proclamation for the 30th anniversary, SEED can share what has been prepared for other states’ proclamations. Instead of starting from scratch, you might want to use a proclamation developed by another state. We have developed, for the 30th anniversary for other states, a joint resolution or executive order that establishes working groups so the state can systematically look at how to expand and improve disability policy.

SEED is here as a resource for you. If you want help in drafting legislation, SEED can do that. If you want to learn what other states have done to enhance employment opportunities, we can share that. We have gone into a number of states, and they have said, look at our policy from a comprehensive perspective. Where are the gaps? We have done a gap analysis. We are here to provide policy assistance to those states who want to take action, and look at the ADA anniversary as a window of opportunity to foster and facilitate equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Representative Carpino: And Nadia, it’s always a pleasure to speak with you. Why don’t you give us your final thoughts?

Nadia Mossburg: Really, 2020 is going to be remembered for a lot of things. But, on the positive side, this year is the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA. ODEP recognizes that it is a difficult time for many businesses and workers. But we also feel that now more than ever, it is important to honor the 30th anniversary of the ADA because capitalizing on off-segments of the population, including people with disabilities, will be essential for America’s economy, economic recovery, and growth. So, throughout 2020, I encourage you to continue to observe and celebrate increasing access and opportunity. Really, that’s the concept of the combinations inherent in the ADA’s employment provisions. The idea that people with disabilities and workers with disabilities have access to the supports they need to be productive is perhaps more relevant than ever because we have all had to learn to adapt and figure how we work best through the pandemic.

The other thing that I would just add is that the ADA helped open the doors to get me and a lot of other people with disabilities, where I am today. But I also very aware that as we continue to move forward as a society, and in light of new developments in technology, that it is very possible that as new technologies are developed, people with disabilities may face additional barriers. One of the ways that I think that we can best honor the spirit of the ADA and what the drafters and advocates intended is to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the process of developing and implementing policy moving forward, and that means having a seat at the table and a voice in the conversation.



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Representative Carpino: It’s been an incredible 30 years of breaking down barriers and striving for equality in employment, education, and public access for people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act remains a crucial tool in addressing persistent discrimination, and new barriers, like inaccessible websites, online systems, mobile apps, and other forms of information and communication technology. One thing is certain, what we do today will impact future generations of people looking to live their own American Dream over the next 30 years.

I’d like to thank all of our guests for joining us on the latest Women In Government Podcast. I’d also like to thank all the listeners for taking the time to hear this important discussion. Don’t forget to subscribe to, like or share our podcast. You can also email us by visiting womeningovernment.org.

Voiceover: You’ve been listening to the Women In Government Podcast, a resource made available for those interested in discussing Health Care, Education and Energy... along with so many other topics. For more information please visit our website at womeningovernment.org.



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