

August 4, 2007

## 1. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

- a. **Do you support the creation and appointment of a permanent Assistant to the President for Disability Policy at the White House?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** Ever since I walked door-to-door for a project for the Children's Defense Fund where I sought to account for the number of disabled children not attending public school, I have recognized the need to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities. From that experience in 1973 to now, I have been passionate about working on behalf of individuals with special needs. As President, I vow to remain committed to this issue, and I look forward to working with disability groups. Part of this outreach will include the appointment of liaisons and officials who are committed to enriching the lives of all Americans who live with disabilities. I have not made any commitments about how I would organize the White House at this level, but I can assure you that the needs and interests of persons with disabilities will be well represented in my Administration and, most importantly, integrated into every relevant domestic and international policy discussion.

- b. **How will you make sure qualified people with disabilities will be a part of your political team and, if elected, as part of your administration?**

**Obama:** Individuals with disabilities are an essential part of communities throughout this country, and I believe that receiving input from persons with disabilities is of utmost importance for government leaders. I am committed to ensuring that more job opportunities are provided to individuals with disabilities and that includes hiring people with disabilities on my campaign staff and, if elected, as part of my Administration.

**Clinton:** I was proud of the contributions of the numerous professionals with disabilities who made significant contributions to policy development and implementation during the Clinton Administration. I plan to repeat, if not enhance, that record. As President, I pledge that I will appoint the most qualified, dedicated, and public-minded people to serve in government, and I believe those people will be diverse in physical ability, race, ethnicity and other characteristics. I feel there is a compelling need to appoint people who understand the challenges facing Americans with disabilities, as well as appointing those qualified individuals that have a physical disability. Throughout my career I have hired a diverse staff because I believe that is how to obtain the best advice – through a range of perspectives. I am eagerly looking forward to working with a broad segment of the population, regardless of physical ability.

## 2. EMPLOYMENT

- . **What steps would you take to reduce employment barriers and improve employment outcomes for Americans with disabilities?**

**Obama:** The barriers that workers with disabilities face in the labor market and workplace are complicated, interrelated, and stubborn. It will take strong leadership from a President dedicated to increasing the employment rate of workers with disabilities in order to define our goals, marshal the necessary resources, bridge bureaucratic and programmatic boundaries, and lead employers, service providers, and people with disabilities into the future.

I recently met a 22 year-old woman with disabilities in New Hampshire. She spoke about her disabilities that have greatly affected her life, with symptoms similar to multiple sclerosis. Her requests were simple – she wanted to work and do those things that people with healthy bodies often take for granted. I am committed to making sure that those simple requests are honored. My goal is to increase the employment rate among workers with disabilities so that it is as close as possible to the employment rate for all American workers. Achieving this goal will require several steps.

First, we must recognize that with proper support, people with disabilities are strong contributors to society. All Americans, regardless of disability, deserve a dignified life, and there are many government programs that are essential to this commitment. I am a strong supporter of the 1965 Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, which facilitates government purchase of products made by blind and severely disabled Americans. I have worked closely with the Chicago Lighthouse (a nonprofit serving the blind that manufactures office products) to strengthen this legislation. And I have called on the Government Accountability Office to investigate the federal government's compliance with the Act's mandates.

Second, we must increase educational opportunities for the disabled. What you learn plays an important role in what you earn and whether you are employed. Yet students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school and, even if they finish high school, are less likely to pursue four-year college degrees. We must fund IDEA and increase the emphasis in secondary schools on students' transition planning for college. And we must provide the necessary funding for Vocational Rehabilitation and Pell Grants to support students with disabilities seeking college degrees.

Third, we must solve our health care crisis. One of the most important barriers to workers with disabilities seeking and keeping jobs is the uncertainty associated with the employer-based health insurance system. For adults with disabilities, no health insurance can mean irrevocable physical and mental health deterioration because they need regular care and supervision of their conditions by doctors and specialists. Without health insurance, they must pay for these services out of pocket and, as a result, might forego or delay the medical care they need. Yet 45 million Americans currently have no health insurance. A smaller percentage of workers currently have employer-provided health insurance than had it in 1987. A smaller percentage of employers provide health insurance. And the costs of health insurance to workers have risen. Assuring that people with disabilities can have jobs with health insurance will be a critical step to increasing their opportunities to find employment. That is why I am committed to signing a universal health care plan into law by the end of my first term in office and having a plan that will lower premium costs for a typical family by \$2,500.

Fourth, we must strengthen our civil rights laws to protect disabled Americans from employment discrimination. I am committed to funding and better enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as strengthening other legislation to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in the workplace.

Finally, I will direct my administration to increase the employment of workers with disabilities during my first term. I will also use the authority provided to the President, as well as my bully pulpit, to encourage private-sector employers to increase their hiring of workers with disabilities. Among other things, private-sector employers should be encouraged to increase their use of existing tax benefits like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to hire more workers with disabilities.

**Clinton:** I strongly believe that we have an obligation to help those with disabilities achieve meaningful employment opportunities. As a testament to this commitment, I

rigorously fought the Bush Administration's "WIA-Plus" proposal, which would have undermined the Vocational Rehabilitation program by allowing states to spend the money on a wide range of activities, including those that would not help individuals with disabilities address barriers to employment. As President, I pledge to financially support the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, while also proposing additional legislation that would empower Americans with disabilities. In addition, my husband was proud to sign into law the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which created the Ticket to Work legislation. This bill made it possible for individuals with disabilities to maintain their Medicaid coverage while working full-time. I believe people shouldn't lose their health insurance if they chose to go back to work, and that we should work aggressively to remove barriers to work for individuals with disabilities.

- a. **How would you reform the federal income support programs (Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance) so that beneficiaries enjoy a greater standard of living and participate more fully in the labor market?**

**Obama:** In addition to increasing the employment rate of workers with disabilities to match, as close as possible, the employment rate among all workers, I believe firmly that we must assure that people with disabilities who cannot support themselves through work have adequate income and health insurance to sustain dignified lives. Any reform of the SSDI and SSI programs must satisfy both of these goals.

First, delays in benefit determinations must be drastically reduced. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has been consistently under funded, resulting in unconscionable delays for individuals applying for the Social Security Supplement Security Income (SSI) program. I am committed to both increasing SSI administrative funding and streamlining the current application and appeals procedures to reduce the confusion that surrounds this important program.

Second, we must assure that beneficiaries who are willing to seek employment and leave the SSDI or SSI rolls have access to affordable, reliable health insurance coverage. Again, lack of reliable and comprehensive health insurance is one of the reasons people with disabilities who might work seek benefits from SSDI and SSI and do not leave the rolls. My health care plan provides access to good quality health insurance for all.

Third, by amending the ADA and otherwise pushing employers to provide accommodations to their employees with disabilities, we can decrease the number of workers who leave the labor market after experiencing an impairment. We can prevent workers seeking SSDI by endeavoring to find ways to keep them in their workplaces.

Fourth, we must revisit the Ticket to Work Act to assess whether it has succeeded in providing SSDI beneficiaries with the supports they need to transition into work.

Finally, I am eager to find strategies that will help young people transition from school to work rather than from school to SSI. Full funding of IDEA will help with this process, but there is more we can do.

**Clinton:** I firmly believe that programs like and Social Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance provide an invaluable safety net for those individuals that might need governmental assistance. And I am committed to helping beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI not just make ends meet, but also improve their life and meaningfully participate in society. As President, I will examine these programs to see how they should be improved, including by increasing the benefit level, in order to ensure that Americans living with disabilities can enjoy a greater standard of

living and participate in the labor market to the degree they are able. For example, I cosponsored the Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act of 2005, a bill that sought to phase out the waiting period for disabled individuals to become eligible for Medicare benefits.

- b. **According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, between 1993 and 2004, federal workers with significant disabilities left the federal workforce at rate more than seven times the general reduction in the federal workforce during that period. What actions would you take to ensure that qualified workers with disabilities are given meaningful opportunities to participate in the federal workforce at all levels?**

**Obama:** I believe that qualified workers with disabilities should have the same opportunities as other workers. I am committed to funding and better enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as strengthening other legislation to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in the workplace.

I also believe that the federal government should be a model employer of workers with disabilities. I will direct all of my department and agency heads to bring their agencies into full compliance with all aspects of the Rehabilitation Act. To assure that the federal government holds itself to high anti-discrimination standards, I will increase funding to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and assure that the person I appoint to Chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is committed to enforcing anti-discrimination laws that protect federal employees through a strong Office of Federal Operations. Perhaps most important, I will provide leadership to my appointees throughout the executive branch so that they, employers in the private sector, and workers with disabilities across the country will understand the importance of this issue.

**Clinton:** I strongly feel that the federal government should spearhead the effort to provide meaningful employment opportunities to all individuals – especially individuals with disabilities. As President, I will encourage all executive agencies to aggressively recruit and retain qualified individuals with disabilities for federal service. Our country loses out when individuals with disabilities exit the federal workforce at higher rates than other workers. Individuals with disabilities bring a unique and important perspective to all aspects of governance. As President, I will ensure that the federal government carefully tracks data on the hiring and length of employment of individuals with disabilities and that we take corrective action if we continue to fall short of equity between disabled and abled workers. I will also ensure that we rely on best practices to increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are hired, increase their job satisfaction levels, and increase their duration of service so that it is at least on par with all workers.

### 3. **HEALTH CARE FOR ALL**

- . **What steps would you take to ensure that people with disabilities have access to affordable, quality health care that is responsive to their needs?**

**Obama:** As president, I will sign a universal health care plan into law by the end of my first term in office. I will modernize the U.S. health care system to improve quality and reduce costs by \$2,500 for a typical family. And I will increase investment in public health to prepare and protect Americans against emerging health threats and to reduce rates of preventable diseases.

My plan will cover the uninsured and lower costs to families and businesses. I will allow people who do not have access to group coverage through their employers or public programs (such as Medicaid, SCHIP, and Medicare) to buy into a national pool, which will offer a new public plan similar to the one I have as a member of

Congress, and private plans that offer comprehensive benefits and meet quality standards. Federal subsidies will be made available to those who need it, to make coverage more affordable. And employers will have access to reinsurance to protect them from volatile and high increases in the cost of insurance. Finally, my plan will mandate health insurance coverage for every child in America.

My health care reform plan recognizes that although all Americans are affected by problems with our health care delivery system, certain patient populations are significantly more likely to experience difficulties gaining access to health care and to receive lower quality health care. I will require that all health care providers collect, analyze and report data on the quality of health care given to vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, to ensure appropriate care and good health outcomes. My plan also emphasizes care coordination and integration, which is particularly important for individuals with disabilities who often have multiple providers. Last but not least, I will support additional training of health care workers so that they are better able to address the needs of disabled populations.

**Clinton:** As President, I will enact legislation to provide high quality affordable health care coverage for all Americans, including those with disabilities. I will ensure that disability advocates are included in the process of developing the legislation to provide health care coverage for all Americans, and that the system that I ultimately sign into law addresses the particular needs of individuals with special needs. Today, even those individuals who have health insurance are often under-insured – that is, when they need treatment, their health insurer denies the claim. These practices can have a particularly damaging impact on individuals with disabilities who often need care urgently. I have been working to address the major problems in our health care system for fifteen years. I have taken on the health insurance companies and other special interests that too often work against the interests of those in need of care. In addition to addressing discriminatory insurance practices, we have to make sure that there's affordable health coverage for all. To that end, we need to develop the best approaches to delivering quality cost effective care that meets the needs of individuals instead of continuing with the antiquated policy approach of today that applies a one size fits all model

Beyond co-sponsoring the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act of 2005, I've also supported the numerous and inadequate state-based medically needy programs that have a bias towards nursing home rather than home and community based coverage. I believe it's time to focus on patients needs rather than on bureaucratic constraints imposed long ago. As President, I will continue to champion these policies.

a. **How or will you use managed care principles to deliver healthcare services?**

**Obama:** Important medical decisions should be made between patients and doctors, and my health care reform plan will ensure that insurers do not prevent disabled Americans from getting the care they need. My plan will constrain costs and adopt those managed care principles that work, such as the use of modern health information technology, disease management, care coordination and drug price negotiation, to achieve health care quality improvement and savings in the system that can directly benefit individuals and families through lower premiums. My plan will not contain costs at the expense of quality of care. To the contrary, my plan will both reduce health care costs and improve the quality of care.

**Clinton:** Poorly run fee for service as well as managed care is the wrong prescription for everyone, particularly people with disabilities. Rather than applying old line thinking of managed care or fee for service, I believe we should move towards patient-centered care. When my husband was President, I lead the fight for the Patient's Bill of Rights in order to protect patients' access to specialty care. I have

also proposed establishing an independent public-private Best Practices Institute. This Institute would be a partnership among the public and the private sector that would let doctors, nurses and other health professionals know what drugs, devices, surgeries and treatments work best. These programs will be able to allow us to deliver the most affordable, and the highest quality, healthcare services to all Americans.

**b. How would you improve the quality of health and rehabilitation services provided to veterans with disabilities?**

**Obama:** I believe we need to care for our veterans with disabilities with the same commitment they demonstrated on the battle field. I am committed to creating a 21st Century Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that will not be under-funded like the current VA. I will establish an independent team to accurately estimate the future needs and costs associated with our returning service members and their families – so we'll never have to stomach another budgeting process that cuts costs on the backs of veterans.

This VA will be built around the principle that any service-connected injury – whether to the body, to the mind, to the service member or to the family member – represents a call to respond from our nation. It will not attempt to treat an eye injury, or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), as a second-tier wound. Our review systems and dollar investments in this new VA would be geared in favor of the service member. I will ensure that any returning service member has the necessary job training and education opportunities when they get ready to begin the next chapter of their lives.

In Illinois, I worked with Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) to force the VA to notify veterans in Illinois and other states traditionally underserved about their right to seek a review of their past claims. The resulting outreach led to significant numbers of Illinois veterans getting the benefits they deserve.

**Clinton:** Our country owes a duty to our veterans for their service and as President, I will honor that duty. The current administration has done an inadequate job in providing quality healthcare and rehabilitation services to our veterans, especially those returning from recent combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. And I've been working to address these problems. I have previously proposed an independent review of denied claims to help veterans get the benefits they deserve. I have also passed legislation, called the Heroes at Home, to provide specialized treatment for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries and help them and their families reintegrate into society; and introduced the Restoring Disability Benefits for Injured and Wounded Warriors Act of 2007 and the Protecting Military Family Financial Benefits Act of 2007, which would ensure that wounded soldiers receive the disability benefits they need and deserve and to further protect military family financial benefits. As President, I would continue to fulfill our promise to those veterans that have so selflessly fought for our country.

**c. How would you improve the quality of health and rehabilitation services provided to Native Americans with disabilities? Do you support the reauthorization of the Indian Healthcare Act?**

**Obama:** Yes, I strongly support reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. I am an original cosponsor of the bill, which is expected to pass the Senate this year.

As President, I would increase funding for a variety of tribal health care programs that have been cut under the Bush Administration. This includes fully funding clinical

services, and restoring funds for programs such as the Urban Indian Healthcare Program. Second, Native Americans, including those with disabilities, will be able to participate in my universal health care plan which will provide high-quality health care services. I am aware, however, that universal health care for everyone does not mean equal access to healthcare for everyone. One of the major problems facing American Indians is a chronic lack of basic health care facilities. I am committed to investing the necessary resources into health care infrastructure. This includes providing funding for health care workers, and requiring compliance from plans that do not meet performance thresholds.

**Clinton:** I am a strong supporter of developing innovative ways to ensure that health and rehabilitation services are provided to minority groups, particularly Native Americans. In this regard, I am a cosponsor of current Senate Bill 1200, a bill that would expand and reauthorize the Indian Healthcare Act. As President, I will continue to outreach to those groups like Native Americans that have historically been denied high-quality healthcare.

d. **How will you assure people with disabilities have fair access to Medicare Part D prescriptions?**

**Obama:** I am committed to ensuring that Americans with disabilities receive Medicaid and Medicare benefits in a low-cost, effective and timely manner. I have worked with Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) to urge the Department of Health and Human Services to provide clear and reliable information on the Medicare prescription drug benefit and to ensure that Medicare recipients are protected from fraudulent claims by marketers and drug plan agents. I also support efforts to improve coordination between Medicaid and Medicare so that individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in both programs do not face additional administrative barriers when seeking prescription drug benefits.

We must also reduce inefficient federal spending on the Medicare Part D benefit to invest more money into improving our national health care system. Drug spending has quintupled over the last five years and now costs us almost \$200 billion. We need to reduce drug spending by enabling the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices, clear barriers to generic competition, allowing the safe importation of drugs, and giving consumers the information to make smart purchasing decisions.

**Clinton:** As a Senator, I have been actively involved with ensuring fair and equal access to Medicare Part D prescription drugs. I previously introduced legislation in the Senate to help the most vulnerable seniors and disabled Americans transition to new Medicare plans. I have also urged the administration to aid local pharmacists and beneficiaries, helping these individuals better administer the new Medicare program. As President, I will continue to fight for fair access to Medicare Part D prescriptions and to ensure that policies do not undermine continuity of care for any population served. For example, patients who have been relying on particular pharmaceutical treatments that are most appropriate for their needs should not be suddenly forced to switch medications by indiscriminate cost cutting practices by pharmacy benefit managers. Having said this, we do need to have a better understanding of the best pharmaceutical treatment options for all patients, which is why I have proposed establishing an independent public-private Best Practices Institute. This Institute would be a partnership among the public and the private sector that would let doctors, nurses and other health professionals know what drugs, devices, surgeries and treatments work best.

e. **How will you address the inequities caused by the Medicare "homebound" rule?**

**Obama:** I support amending the Medicare "homebound" rule so that those with severe disabilities have the freedom to leave their homes without fear of having their government benefits taken away. I believe that our Medicare policy must reflect the common sense notion that community engagement and support is a vital component of a meaningful life. I look forward to amending the law to remove arbitrary measures of "acceptable" time away from home and further ensure that individuals do not have benefits removed unfairly.

**Clinton:** I believe that the Medicare "homebound" rule has been enforced in a far too restrictive manner. As President, I will embrace a fair modification of Medicare rules so that disabled Americans are able to live their lives fully, without fear of losing their Medicare benefits. I look forward to addressing this inequality when I am President.

f. **Do you support ongoing Congressional efforts to ensure mental health parity in health insurance (S.558, H.R. 1367)?**

**Obama:** Yes. I championed similar legislation in the state of Illinois and I have cosponsored S. 558.

**Clinton:** I think that our government ought to ensure parity in health insurance coverage of mental health benefits. That is why I have cosponsored the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007. This bill would prohibit employers and health plans from imposing durational treatment limits and financial limitations on coverage for mental illness that do not apply to all other medical conditions. I believe this bill is one step in our effort to provide meaningful mental health care coverage.

#### **4. LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS**

**How would you address America's increasing need for home and community-based long-term services and supports (such as personal assistance services, respite care, and other supports)?**

**Obama:** I believe the federal government must take a larger role in transitioning our long-term care system from institutions to home and community-based settings. I support efforts to improve federal funding and administrative support to states and the private sector to accomplish the goal of providing quality long-term care in home and community settings to all Americans who need such services.

I have also worked to ensure that states and cities have adequate plans in place to care for special-needs populations. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, my legislation to require that states properly plan to evacuate special needs individuals during times of crisis passed Congress. I believe that this is only the first step in ensuring that the most vulnerable individuals in local and national emergencies are adequately safeguarded.

I have sponsored legislation to provide a traumatic injury protection rider to servicemembers insured under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. I sponsored legislation in Illinois requiring an emergency evacuation plan for every high-rise structure for the safe and timely evacuation of people with disabilities.

**Clinton:** We need to have a new national long term care policy that recognizes a realistic division of responsibility between public and private payers. Today, all we have is an institutionally-based pseudo-long-term health care system called Medicaid, which is supplemented all too poorly by expensive, inadequate private long term care insurance. I believe all Americans should be able live in their homes and communities

for as long as they are able, and that home and community-based long term services are essential to achieving that goal. I have been a strong champion for these services and support in the Senate. Recently, I joined with my colleagues to introduce the Home and Community-Based Services Copayment Equity Act, which would eliminate Medicare Part D co-payments for more than one million low-income Americans, including dual eligible residents of AL/RC facilities and other licensed facilities such as group homes for people with developmental disabilities, psychiatric health facilities, and mental health rehabilitation centers. I was also proud that my bill, the Lifespan Respite Care Act, which authorized almost \$300 million over five years for grants to increase the availability of respite care services for family caregivers of individuals with special needs regardless of age, was enacted into law. As President, I will continue to champion access to long term home and community based services, and once again work to bring together all stakeholders to develop a far more rational American long term care policy.

i. **Do you support the Community Choice Act of 2007 (S.799, H.R. 1621) and/or the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act of 2007 (CLASS Act of 2007)?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** I strongly support the Community Choice Act of 2007, a bill that would amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide individuals with disabilities and older Americans with equal access to community-based attendant services and supports. In fact, I am one of the thirteen cosponsors of the bill. As President, I will continue to champion causes like the Community Choice Act.

ii. **What other steps would you take to help states implement the Olmstead v. L.C. Supreme Court decision and help address the institutional bias in the current Medicaid system?**

**Obama:** We still have considerable progress to make in ensuring that Americans with disabilities have the rights affirmed to them in the Olmstead v. L.C. decision. In addition to supporting the Community Choice Act of 2007 and the CLASS Act of 2007, I believe that we should further incentivize states to provide Americans with disabilities the ability to choose the most appropriate care for their individual needs. The federal government should help states increase the supply of high-quality community settings for individuals with disabilities by providing additional grants for new communities and community expansions. Second, we should help improve the quality of those settings by providing more transparency of the settings' performance.

We must use technology to make community-based living a reality for more people with disabilities. For this reason, I support elimination of the in-the-home Medicare exclusion which deprives people with disabilities of assistive technologies they need simply because those technologies might be used beyond the thresholds of their homes. I also support the Fostering Independence Through Technology Act for the same reason – it offers 21st century solutions to stubborn barriers for people with disabilities.

**Clinton:** I believe that the Olmstead opinion was a tremendously important moment in the disability movement. The Court affirmed that states have an obligation to move individuals with disabilities from institutional settings into more integrated settings in the community if moving them would not fundamentally alter the states' service systems. As President, I would

support efforts to help states comply with this and other Supreme Court decisions, and I would continue to abide by Executive Order 13217, which directed agencies to identify federal laws, regulations, policies and practices that impede community participation by people with disabilities, and I would also make certain that the office of Civil Rights is enforcing current law, for a law without enforcement is nothing more than an empty promise

a. **Will you propose integrating acute and long-term services by using integrated managed care principles?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** I have proposed to transform care of today's chronically ill population to improve outcomes by using state-of-the-art chronic care coordination models within federally-funded programs, such as Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), to provide care for Americans afflicted with these costly, multi-faceted and difficult to manage illnesses. I have also proposed to allow multispecialty clinics, private plans and provider-sponsored organizations to bid on and provide coordinated care services. I also believe we need stronger incentives for participation in chronic care management programs, and have proposed establishing an independent public-private Best Practices Institute, which would be a partnership among the public and the private sector, to finance comparative effectiveness research.

b. **How will you address the shortage of community direct care attendants?**

**Obama:** I support the Community Choice Act of 2007 and its provisions to both increase the number of community direct care attendants and ensure high-quality care for Americans with disabilities. The shortage of community direct care attendants is related to shortages in other sectors of the economy – low pay, limited or no benefits and inflexible working hours. I support increasing the minimum wage to provide a working wage to direct care attendants, as well as providing them in addition to all other Americans access to high-quality, affordable health insurance. I also support expanding the Family Medical Leave Act to include more workers and improve the support given to workers who have dependants at home. I believe that these measures will go a long way to improving the supply and job satisfaction of community direct care attendants. I also believe that we should strengthen ties between community direct care settings and federal, state and local job training programs to ensure that individuals receive information about job openings.

**Clinton:** I think we ought to be particularly concerned about the dire shortage of community direct care attendants. I have tried to address this problem directly by proposing programs that would train family caregivers as direct care attendants so that these family caregivers can receive compensation for their payment. I would continue to champion this and other solutions to the shortage issue as well as providing added incentives, such as tax credits, to encourage more individuals to practice the selfless profession of caring for others. I also believe that we can and must work with labor representatives to serve as hubs for training and placement for all long term care settings, particularly those within the community.

c. **How will you address the lack of coordination between Medicare and Medicaid policies?**

**Obama:** Too many Medicare and Medicaid "dual eligibles" are subject to time-consuming and complicated administrative processes that delay access to care and can result in lower quality care. This administrative problem is compounded by the increased health needs of the dual eligibles population. Although CMS has taken

steps to alleviate these problems, I believe more should be done. I support streamlining the benefits process for individuals with disabilities so that people receive the care they require in a timely manner. Both programs should give individuals with disabilities more information about the care they are entitled to receive under both programs, so decisions about care can be made in a unified manner. I also believe that the demonstration projects that the Community Choice Act of 2007 seeks to create to improve coordination between benefits received by dual Medicaid and Medicare recipients are an important step to undertake in addressing this problem.

**Clinton:** To often Medicaid is the poor step child of Medicare and is treated as such within the federal government. But lack of coordination leads to wasteful, poorly coordinated care that produces little more than a cost shifting game between two programs. We need to make certain that federal and state administrators of these programs work in close consultation with all stakeholders, including consumers and providers, to do a much better job in resolving enrollment, operations, benefits, payment, and appeals issues.

## 5. HOUSING

**What would you do to increase the availability of affordable, accessible, integrated housing opportunities in the community for low and moderate income people with disabilities and their families?**

**Obama:** In too many communities, low-income families are priced out of the housing market. Between 1993 and 2003, the number of units affordable to low-income households fell by 1.2 million. As president, I will create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to develop affordable housing in mixed-income neighborhoods. The Fund will use a small percentage of the profits of two government-sponsored housing agencies, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, to create up to 14,000 new units of affordable housing every year.

A family's most important investment is their home. However, there is a growing epidemic of mortgage fraud crimes in which sophisticated scam artists use elaborate scams to cheat homeowners out of their mortgages. I introduced legislation that would increase funding for federal law enforcement programs, create new criminal penalties for mortgage professionals found guilty of fraud, and require industry insiders to report suspicious activity. In the Illinois state legislature, I cosponsored a bill creating the High Risk Home Loan Act to protect borrowers who enter into high risk home loans. As president, I will fight to ensure more Americans can achieve and protect the dream of home ownership. I also support increasing federal support for affordable rental housing, and recently called for a new Affordable Housing Trust Fund to build up to 14,000 additional units each year for lower-income individuals in mixed-income neighborhoods.

In the Illinois Senate, I was also the chief cosponsor of a bill including disabled persons within the provisions granting an assessment freeze homestead exception to senior citizens.

**Clinton:** I think providing affordable, accessible housing opportunities is one of the most important keys to empowering citizens to be productive contributors to the broader community. While not unique to the disability community, it is even more important to people with disabilities. That is why I proposed the 21st Century Housing Act last year. The Act would reform and modernize the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and allow for a long needed investment in personnel and technology infrastructure to remain competitive and useful to consumers. The 21st Century Housing Act provides the FHA with the flexibility to offer loan terms up to 50 years to decrease monthly mortgage payments and reduced or zero down payment

plans to families that lack the upfront cash for a down payment. These types of program would extend housing opportunities to all individuals, especially those families that depend on governmental assistance.

a. **How will you assure the vigorous implementation of all Fair Housing Laws?**

**Obama:** As a former civil rights lawyer, I understand firsthand the importance of ensuring that all Americans have the same opportunities and rights. Unfortunately, as we know all too well, even with strong constitutional and federal mandates to provide equal opportunity, too many individuals have their civil rights infringed. I believe that we must ensure that the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity within the Department of Housing and Urban Development is adequately funded and staffed so that the Office is able to fully investigate all meaningful discrimination claims made by individuals with disabilities.

**Clinton:** While I believe that we ought to ensure that all Fair Housing laws are enforced, I think we ought to have the government lead by example. To ensure that the government housing authorities act fairly, I have introduced the Federal Housing Fairness Act. This legislation would increase the FHA loan limits so that working families in high-cost areas can use the program. This Act would also ensure that working families in high cost of living states are not denied the benefit of this program. Likewise, I would champion rigorous enforcement of laws that govern fairness in private housing.

b. **How will you assure that HUD implements programs that will assist states in complying with the Olmstead decision?**

**Obama:** I support building on President Bush's New Freedom Initiative to improve the supply of affordable housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. First, I believe that housing assistance should ensure that individuals with disabilities have a greater choice as to where and how they can use their housing benefits. Second, I support efforts, such as the Community Choice Act of 2007, to improve the federal funding under the Medicaid program for individuals to live in home or community-based settings. I also support examining additional approaches to incentivize states to increase the supply of affordable, safe and quality housing for individuals with disabilities.

**Clinton:** I am committed to ensuring that HUD can implement its objectives and also assist states in complying with federal law and federal court precedent. Towards this end, I proposed the Suburban Core Opportunity, Restoration, and Enhancement (SCORE) Act in 2005, which established a \$250 million Reinvestment Fund authorization within the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This fund was specifically designed to allow local community leaders and elected authorities to develop initiatives in cooperation with private-sector partners. As President, I will continue to fund HUD, and oversee the agency to ensure that HUD is fulfilling its objectives.

## 6. TRANSPORTATION

**What would you do to expand access to affordable, accessible transportation for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas?**

**Obama:** Congress must enact pending transportation reauthorization legislation without further delay and make provisions for accessible options for individuals with disabilities. This includes highway, mass transit, commuter rail, and air transportation improvements.

**Clinton:** I am very aware that providing meaningful transportation opportunities to people with disabilities is an invaluable first step in empowering individuals to fulfill their potential and live self-sufficiently. Given the need for accessible and affordable transportation, I have consistently supported the Community Service Block Grant Program, a program that traditionally helps fund and support transportation projects (among other projects). Additionally, as a Senator, I have tried to secure funding for agencies that provide transportation services to those individuals with disabilities. As President, I will continue to proudly champion programs that ensure people with disabilities can have access to transportation resources.

## 7. EDUCATION

### **How would you ensure that students with disabilities are included within and accommodated as part of the accountability measures of No Child Left Behind?**

**Obama:** The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is the right one – ensuring that all children can meet high standards – but the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed. Unfulfilled funding promises, inadequate implementation by the Department of Education, and shortcomings in the design of the law itself have limited its effectiveness and undercut its support among many people who care deeply about our schools and our students. I would reform and fund No Child Left Behind and add specific provisions for programs for students with disabilities. This includes early and targeted instruction and hiring highly qualified general and special education teachers. States, school districts and schools must continue to measure and report the academic performance of students with disabilities. This is why I fully support the IDEA Act.

**Clinton:** While I have many concerns about the No Child Left Behind Act, one aspect of the law that I am pleased about is that it shines a spotlight on the education of students with special needs and ensures that schools focus greater attention and resources on getting all children achieving at a proficient level. At the same I think it is important that the assessment provisions allow children with special needs to receive the accommodations they need to demonstrate their true abilities on the assessments, and that we invest in programs to increase the number of qualified special education teachers. In addition, I have co-sponsored the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act, which would have significantly improved access to instructional materials for students who are blind or have other print disabilities by creating an efficient system for acquiring and distributing these materials in specialized formats, which include braille, synthesized speech, digital text, digital audio, and large print.

### **a. Do you support full federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?**

**Obama:** This is one of my top educational priorities. I will fight to increase federal funding levels, and actively solicit the support of both Republicans and Democrats that are watching efforts at school improvement falter as school districts layoff teachers and much needed programs. The federal government is supposed to shoulder 40 percent of each state's "excess cost" of educating children with disabilities, but currently we are less than halfway there (17 percent) because Congress has never lived up to this obligation. Children are the ones who are being shortchanged. Schools should not be forced to choose between salaries for effective teachers and special education for students who need that support. Fully funding IDEA will help to relieve that burden by supplying the necessary dollars to boost the quality and range of the services available.

**Clinton:** I am a strong proponent of full federal funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and have consistently advocated for this policy throughout

my tenure in the Senate. In 2005, I sponsored an amendment to the Labor, HHS, and Education appropriations bill to increase funding of IDEA by \$4 billion. I think it is disgraceful that the federal government has promised to provide 40 percent of the cost of educating a student with special needs yet has never appropriated more than 20 percent. In addition, I have long embraced provisions that would increase the pool of qualified special education teachers, provide those teachers with additional professional development opportunities, and provide targeted support for the growing number of children with behavioral and emotional disorders.

b. **What ideas do you have for strengthening federal enforcement of IDEA?**

**Obama:** I have consistently supported legislation that would increase funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act. In 2005, I supported legislation that would provide \$4 billion in additional funding for IDEA. I also voted for waiving the Budget Act to consider the Byrd amendment, which would provide \$5 billion for title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. In 2005, I voted for creating a reserve fund that would provide \$71.3 billion for special education programs under IDEA. I will work to increase that a meaningful portion of the funding increases for IDEA are targeted to enforcement of the Act's mandates.

**Clinton:** While I am a very strong proponent of IDEA, I also believe that the federal government can do more to champion the values underlying the IDEA program through enforcement. I co-sponsored the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act, which was signed into law on December 3, 2004. This bill strengthened IDEA by expanding monitoring and enforcement mechanisms and enabling parents and schools to resolve disputes equitably while also improving access to professional development for all teachers, improving students' transitions from high school to adulthood, and involving parents more thoroughly in the education of their children. As President, I will continue to seek out ways to ensure that IDEA is enforced in order to ensure that it is truly effective in achieving the goal of having every child with special needs receive a free, appropriate public education.

c. **What ideas do you have for increasing the high school graduation rate of students served by IDEA?**

**Obama:** Requirements determining graduation rates should include adequate yearly progress reports, but these must be enhanced in order to produce substantial and consistent improvement in graduation rates for students served by IDEA.

**Clinton:** I believe that we ought to commit ourselves to improving high school graduation rates for all students, especially students with disabilities. Improving graduation rates often starts with improving the quality of all teachers and staff who are responsible for educating students. Towards this end, I was a proud co-sponsor of the Personnel Excellence for Children with Disabilities Act, which promised to help schools recruit and retain new special education teachers, and better prepare general education teachers and staff to work with children with special needs. This bill also pledged to make research-based, comprehensive professional development available to teachers. Much of the language in this bill was included in S. 1248, which was signed into law on December 3, 2004. I am also a strong supporter of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, which helps students with disabilities make a smooth transition from high school to employment. I think we can do much more to help students with special needs envision an exciting future for themselves in which they live self sufficiently and fulfill their potential.

d. **How would you improve services for students transitioning from school to employment? From high school to higher education?**

**Obama:** In order to make college more accessible and affordable for students, I will increase federal college loans and free up money for student aid. The first bill I introduced in the U.S. Senate would help make college more affordable for many Americans. The bill would increase the maximum Pell Grant from the current limit of \$4,050 to a new maximum of \$5,100. In February 2007, Congress passed and President Bush signed into law legislation to increase federal Pell grants to \$4,310. I also want to reform college loans to make more money available for student aid. There are two federal college loan programs. The first allows students to borrow directly from the government, and the second gives private banks federal subsidies to make government-backed student loans. Privately funded loans are much more expensive to the federal government, which is why I support legislation to shift more loans to the Direct Loan program and use the savings to invest in grant aid to students.

I support the creation of high-paying, secure jobs. I believe we need to increase federal funding for basic research, expand the deployment of broadband technology, and make the research and development tax credit permanent so that businesses can invest in innovation and create more and better jobs for students transitioning from school to employment.

**Clinton:** I think we ought to focus our attention not only on providing educational opportunities, but also on ensuring students transition from primary school to other endeavors. That is why I support the Vocational Rehabilitation program, which helps ensure that every student with a disability has a plan for transitioning out of high school and into college or full time employment. I think this program needs additional funding so that it can reach more students. Too many states have been forced to enter an order of selection where they have to choose between students with varying levels of need. I believe this program should serve every young person with a disability and start reaching out to them when they are even younger. As President, I will increase funding for Vocational Rehabilitation and work with states to improve their programs so that they are sharing best practices and more effectively reaching all of the students who could benefit from these services.

## 8. TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

a. **Do you support legislative measures to require that Internet technologies be made accessible to and usable by people with disabilities?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** I am a strong proponent of ensuring that all individuals have access to internet technologies. For example, I recently proposed a bill in the Senate that would evaluate best practices and foster access to technology in underserved areas. With respect to individuals with disabilities, I would strongly support initiatives that make internet technology more accessible. In so doing, I would welcome comments from interested groups, and my administration would continue to seek innovative ways of promoting meaningful access to internet technologies.

a. **What measures would you propose to ensure that consumer electronic and telecommunications devices are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities?**

**Obama:** I strongly support reducing barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from making beneficial use of new technologies. I believe that government can provide incentives for the private sector to make consumer technologies more

accessible by both making use of the government's extensive purchasing power and working with the private sector informally. For example, I will direct my Assistant to the President for Disability Policy to work with the private sector on behalf of individuals with disabilities and also request that the National Council on Disabilities further examine what steps the government can take to improve usage of new technologies by persons with disabilities. In the Illinois Senate, I voted to require telecommunications carriers to provide directory assistance to legally blind customers in their own calling area at no charge.

**Clinton:** I think the key method to ensuring that consumer electronic and telecommunications devices are accessible is to vigilantly enforce the Americans with Disability Act. Vigilant enforcement of the ADA requires that a President appoint executive and judicial officials who are committed to the needs of the disabled population. In addition to enforcing the ADA, I would listen and work with the Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC), a federal advisory committee comprising representatives from more than 40 companies, organizations and federal agencies. I believe that organizations like TEITAC can offer fresh ideas and present innovative strategies to meet the needs of disabled individuals. Lastly, I would continue to help educate government agencies, private corporations, and the public about the law's requirements.

**b. How would you ensure enforcement of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act?**

**Obama:** Effective enforcement of these laws will begin with the next President communicating his strong support for the goals and spirit of these laws to the leadership of the executive branch departments and agencies, including the President's appointees to the Federal Communications Commission, and to federal employees with disabilities. That is where I will begin.

I believe that the federal government should be a model employer of workers with disabilities. I will direct my department and agency heads to bring their organizations into full compliance with Section 508. And I will establish a management system through the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration to assure that they comply and have the necessary resources to comply.

But equally important, the federal government should be innovative in using technology both to enable a significant increase in the number of workers with disabilities hired by the federal government and the productivity of incumbent federal employees. The Defense Department's Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program is a model in this regard.

I will also appoint FCC Commissioners who share my commitment to enforcing Section 255 and other laws that make technology accessible to all people with disabilities. The FCC should be engaged in a continuing dialogue with manufacturers, including enforcement actions where necessary, to assure that they incorporate universal design principles into all telecommunications products. To the extent feasible, existing technologies should also be made accessible to people with disabilities.

**Clinton:** I have strongly embraced Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (requiring federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities) and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act (requiring telecommunications products and services to be accessible to people with disabilities). As President, I would ensure enforcement of both sections by appointing responsible and qualified leaders to the US Access Board and the Federal

Communication Commission (the agency charged with overseeing Section 255). Additionally, I would champion efforts by the US Access Board to thoroughly investigate complaints from the public concerning insufficient compliance with Section 508 and Section 255. Lastly, I would expand government outreach programs so the public would be aware of their rights under the Rehabilitation Act and Telecommunications Act.

c. **Would you support restoration of full funding for the Technology-related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act programs?**

**Obama:** Yes. Assistive technologies are an essential component of strategies for increasing workers with disabilities' employment rate and making independent living possible for people with disabilities. State Assistive Technology Programs, National Technical Assistance, the National Internet Site, and the Protection and Advocacy Assistive Technology program are important efforts to increase knowledge about assistive technologies and make these technologies readily available. Full funding is needed to assure that a wide variety of services are provided through these programs, including training and technical assistance, information and referral services, activities to promote coordination and collaboration at the state level, cooperative or bulk buying programs, assisting people with disabilities who can't afford to take a loan with funding, and providing help with finding and leveraging other funding sources for assistive technologies. For this reason, I support full funding.

**Clinton:** I am a strong proponent of the Individuals with Disabilities Act programs, including the programs that allow for access to technology for students, and I believe that the government ought to fund the Act's programs. In 2005, I offered an amendment to increase funding for IDEA by \$4 billion. My amendment failed narrowly but my commitment to this issue has not waned. I am excited by the rapid development of techniques that can assist students with disabilities in their cognitive development. I will do everything in my power to ensure that those technologies get into the hands of children who need them in order to enable them to learn, grow, and fulfill their potential. As President, I would continue to proudly fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act programs.

## 9. VOTING

**What steps would you take as President to ensure that voters with disabilities are able to vote privately and independently, consistent with the requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)?**

**Obama:** Americans with disabilities would be amongst the most disenfranchised by recent efforts to require mandatory photo ID at polling places. More than 3 million Americans with disabilities lack a government-issued form of identification. I opposed unreasonable voter identification requirements and believe that the constitutional rights of individuals with disabilities should be safeguarded. I also support fully funding HAVA so that we can ensure that all of its provisions are properly implemented.

**Clinton:** I am strongly committed to protecting voting rights for voters with disabilities. As a Senator, I introduced legislation the Count Every Vote Act, which requires that at least one voting machine per precinct provided voters with disabilities and language minority voters to cast a vote in a private and independent manner. As President, I will continue to proudly protect the voting rights of all Americans by empowering all members of our community to be able to vote.

a. **Would you require the Census Bureau, in its surveys of people with disabilities, to ask questions regarding whether the respondents are registered to vote and whether they voted in the last election?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** I think that it is important for our government to be aware of the needs of all people, especially those with disabilities. I learned this lesson in 1973, when I went door-to-door and realized that so many children with special needs were not attending school. Given the value of this data collection, I would support measures that would require the Census Bureau to collect data on disabled populations, so that the government may fully respond to challenges facing these individuals.

## 10. CIVIL RIGHTS

**Of the existing members of the U.S. Supreme Court, which justices do you consider models for the kinds of federal judges you would appoint if elected president?**

**Obama:** Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer.

**Clinton:** I strongly feel that the nomination of Supreme Court justices is one of the most important roles of the next President. As a Senator, I strongly opposed and voted against the recent nominations of Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito, because I felt that they did not respect the sanctity of constitutional rights. As President, I pledge to nominate justices with the highest standards of integrity, intelligence, and respect for judicial precedent.

a. **Do you support an ADA Restoration Act, such as the bill introduced in the last Congress?**

**Obama:** Yes.

**Clinton:** I am a strong believer in the value of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a testament to this commitment, I was a cosponsor of a Senate resolution that recognized and honored the 15th anniversary of the enactment of the ADA. As President, I will continue to recognize and embrace the values of the ADA, and I look forward to working with disability-minded groups to protect and strength civil rights protections for Americans with disabilities.

b. **What steps will you take to protect the diminishment of the civil rights protections under the ADA?**

**Obama:** As a former civil rights lawyer, I know firsthand the importance of strong protections for minority communities in our society. I am committed to strengthening and better enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act so that future generations of Americans with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities. I believe we must restore the original legislative intent of the ADA in the wake of court decisions that have restricted the interpretation of this landmark legislation.

In addition, I will appoint judges and justices who respect Congress' role as a co-equal, democratically elected branch of government. The Supreme Court's interpretations of the ADA have shown disrespect for Congress' intent and frustrated the law's goals of fully integrating people with disabilities into society. The ADA declared that people with disabilities are welcome throughout American society. They should not be restricted to disabilities ghettos like "mental institutions." The ADA assumed, rather than doubted, that people with disabilities can be productive workers

contributing to our economy and the support of their families. Perhaps most important, the ADA was a formal acknowledgment that people with disabilities are American citizens with the same rights as other Americans: a right to belong, a right to participate fully in the American experience, and a right to dignity and respect in the workplace and beyond. I do not believe that the Supreme Court should have blunted this essential message of liberty and inclusion. The judges and justices I appoint will not.

**Clinton:** As President, I will pledge to uphold the values intrinsic within the ADA. I will stand proudly with the civil rights community and urge Congress to vigilantly protect the needs of individuals living with disabilities. I will welcome advocacy groups to meet with my administration and voice their concerns. Lastly, I will appoint judges that understand and respect the value of civil rights.

## **11. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Do you support U.S. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol?**

**Obama:** Yes. I believe that the rights of the estimated 650 million individuals with disabilities worldwide must be protected. I support the United States ratification of this important measure.

**Clinton:** I embrace the values that animate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I believe the Convention was undertaken with the same goals that the United States had in enacting the ADA – namely, the goals of empowering individuals with disabilities and integrating these individuals into all aspects of society. Given the virtuous goals embedded within the Convention, I would champion these principles as President.