

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

## **Remarks on Signing the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010**

*October 8, 2010*

Hello, everybody. Good to see you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here today, to be with all of you. I want to make some special acknowledgements. We've got some legislators here who have been fighting on behalf of the disabilities community for a very long time. We're so proud of the legislation I'm signing today, as well as legislation we signed earlier this week. So I want to acknowledge all of them.

First of all, responsible in large part for guiding this process through in the Senate, Senator Mark Pryor of Arkansas; Representative Ed Markey, Democrat from Massachusetts; we also have here Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia. Senator Barbara Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland. We've got Kent Conrad, as well as Byron Dorgan, the Dakota boys from North Dakota. [*Laughter*]

We've got Representative Henry Waxman, who's on so many important pieces of legislation this year, and we're grateful to him. Mr. Julius Genachowski is here, who's the Chairman of the FCC. Where's Julius? There he is right there, a classmate of mine, somebody who has just been a great friend for a long time.

And finally, we've got this guy. [*Laughter*] Some of you may know him. I happened to be listening to him this morning when I woke up. He's what I work out to. [*Laughter*] He's what I sweet-talk Michelle to. [*Laughter*] Mr. Stevie Wonder is in the house. I was doing a little rendition of some of his music to him, and he was kind enough not to laugh. [*Laughter*]

Now, earlier this year, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act right here in the White House. Many of you were here. And it was a moment for every American to reflect not just on one of the most comprehensive civil rights bills in our history, but what that bill meant to so many people. It was a victory won by countless Americans who refused to accept the world as it is and, against great odds, waged quiet struggles and grassroots crusades until finally change was won.

The story of the disability rights movement is enriched because it's intertwined with the story of America's progress. Americans with disabilities are Americans first and foremost, and like all Americans are entitled to not only full participation in our society, but also full opportunity in our society.

So we've come a long way. But even today, after all the progress that we've made, too many Americans with disabilities are still measured by what folks think they can't do, instead of what we know they can do.

The fight for progress isn't about sympathy, by the way; it's about opportunity. And that's why all of us share a responsibility to keep building on the work of those who came before us, one life, one law, one step at a time.

So today we're here to take two more steps on that journey. First of all, on Tuesday I signed Rosa's Law. This is named for a 9-year-old girl, right there. Rosa, wave to everybody. That's some good waving there, Rosa. [*Laughter*]

Rosa Marcellino—it's so inspiring to have her here. As one of hundreds of thousands of Americans with Down Syndrome, Rosa worked with her parents and her siblings to have the words "mentally retarded" officially removed from the health and education code in her home State of Maryland.

Now, Rosa's Law takes her idea a step further. It amends the language in all Federal health, education, and labor laws to remove that same phrase and instead refer to Americans living with an "intellectual disability." Now this may seem to some people like a minor change, but I think Rosa's brother Nick put it best. Where's Nick? You right there, Nick? You can wave too. Go ahead. *[Laughter]*

But I want everybody to hear Nick's wisdom here. He said, "What you call people is how you treat them. If we change the words, maybe it will be the start of a new attitude towards people with disabilities." That's a lot of wisdom from Nick.

Nick and Rosa's parents are all choking up because they're really proud of their kids, and appropriately so.

Now, the bill I'm signing today into law will better ensure full participation in our democracy and our economy for Americans with disabilities. The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act will make it easier for people who are deaf, blind, or live with a visual impairment to do what many of us take for granted, from navigating a TV or DVD menu to sending an e-mail on a smart phone. It sets new standards so that Americans with disabilities can take advantage of the technology our economy depends on. And that's especially important in today's economy, when every worker needs the necessary skills to compete for the jobs of the future.

So together, these changes are about guaranteeing equal access, equal opportunity, and equal respect for every American. And they build on the progress that we've already made as an administration over the last 20 months.

Together, we put in place one of the most important updates to the ADA in 20 years by prohibiting disability-based discrimination by government entities and private businesses and by updating accessibility standards.

I issued an Executive order focused on establishing the Federal Government as a model employer of Americans with disabilities.

We passed the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at addressing the challenge faced by Americans living with paralysis.

We reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program, covering an additional 2.6 million children in need in 2009, including children with disabilities.

And the Affordable Care Act we passed will give every American more control over their health care, and will do more to give Americans with disabilities control over their own lives than any legislation since the ADA.

So equal access, equal opportunity, the freedom to make of our lives what we will, living up to these principles is an obligation we have as Americans, and to one another. Because, in the end, each of us has a role to play in our economy, each of us has something to contribute to the American story, and each of us must do our part to continue on this never-ending journey towards building a more perfect union.

So I am so proud of the legislators here today. I want to thank all the advocates who helped bring this legislation about. And now I'm very proud to sign the bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nina and Paul Marcellino, parents, and Madeline and Gigi Marcellino, sisters, of Rosa Marcellino. He also referred to Rosa's Law, S. 2781, which was approved on October 7, and assigned Public Law No. 111-256. S. 3304, approved October 8, was assigned Public Law No. 111-260.

*Categories:* Bill Signings and Vetoes : Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, remarks.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Conrad, Kent; Dorgan, Bryan, L. ; Genachowski, Julius; Marcellino, Gigi; Marcellino, Rosa; Marcellino,, Madeline; Marcellino,, Nick; Marcellino,, Nina ; Marcellino,, Paul; Markey, Edward J. ; Mikulski, Barbara; Obama, Michelle; Pryor, Mark; Rockefeller, John D. IV; Waxman, HenryA. ; Wonder, Stevie.

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