

ALBUM MODERN LEGISLATION FOR DISABLED WORKERS (PRIMARY SOURCE LEARNING ACTIVITY)

Album Description

This learning activity highlights sections of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) that concern anti-discrimination in the workplace. It also uses video clips from the American Archive of Public Broadcasting to hear from disabled people about the real-life impacts of these laws, as well as continuing challenges to employment. More information about current employment requirements per the ADA can be found on the [EEOC website](#).

Before jumping into the discussion questions, spend some time breaking down the language in the two laws, so students are able to summarize the main ideas in their own words. You might choose to break up the class into pairs or small groups to tackle different parts of the ADA excerpts document and then teach each other.

Potential Discussion Questions

1. How did the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 break from past tradition? In other words, what was the government doing differently now regarding the employment of people with disabilities?
 1. Students might compare these modern laws to the 1918 Rehabilitation Act and/or other government initiatives (like the National Employ the Handicapped Week).
 2. Consider discussing the different models of disability (moral, medical, social, etc.) and their relevance to these laws. (Short descriptions of some of the models can be found [here](#) or [here](#).)
2. What was the major difference between the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding employment?
3. What impacts did the disability legislation have?
4. What obstacles to employment continued to exist for disabled people? Provide specific examples from the video clips.
5. What are attendant services and why are they so important to disabled people's well-being?
6. How does affirmative action in the hiring of disabled people relate to ideas about equality versus equity?

Additional activities

- Ask students to research recent news articles concerning disabled people's employment. Have students analyze their chosen article paying particular attention to whose perspectives are included and/or missing. Then ask students to provide relevant historical context to the article based on what they've learned in class.

This source set can be put into conversation with:

- the longer history of disabled Americans' employment across the twentieth century
- other civil rights legislation (like the Civil Rights Act of 1964) & subsequent affirmative action initiatives
- ongoing employment inequalities (such as the gender wage gap)
- a broader discussion of the ADA (employment is only one component of it)



SEC. 503 OF REHAB ACT OF 1973.JPG

EMPLOYMENT UNDER FEDERAL CONTRACTS

SEC. 503. (a) Any contract in excess of \$2,500 entered into by any Federal department or agency for the procurement of personal property and nonpersonal services (including construction) for the United States shall contain a provision requiring that, in employing persons to carry out such contract the party contracting with the United States shall take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified handicapped individuals as defined in section 7(6).

Teaching Notes:

To understand this law, it's helpful to discuss:

- What is a federal contractor?
- What is affirmative action?

Here's a summary of the law in a bit clearer language from the [Department of Labor](#): “Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a law that prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires employers take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals.”

Reference Link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/house-bill/8070/text?r=12&s=7>

H.R.8070 - An Act to replace the Vocational Rehabilitation Act...

Public Law 93-112 (9/26/1973)

Sec. 503: Employment Under Federal Contracts (p.393)

Alt Text

Employment Under Federal Contracts

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VIDEO OF VOTER'S PIPELINE: "FACES AND ISSUES: THE HANDICAPPED & EMPLOYMENT" (1979)

Teaching Notes:

The whole video is relevant to the topic of the employment of disabled people.

But also, here are three shorter clips you could show:

1) 7:48-8:51 –Disneyland employer discusses adaptations to job screening process for disabled applicants

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-221-17qnkgcx?start=469.87&end=531.22>

2) 10:24 –11:56 – a Blind woman discusses employment problems stemming from stereotypes of disabled people

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-221-17qnkgcx?start=625.19&end=719.17>

3) 26:30-27:57 – discussion of the continued employment problems after the 1973 Rehabilitation Act

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-221-17qnkgcx?start=1585.82&end=1679.79>



**VIDEO CLIP ABOUT ATTENDANT CARE SERVICES (ON LOUISIANA: THE STATE WE'RE IN
#863 IN 1985)**



AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT: TITLE I-EMPLOYMENT EXCERPTS (1990).PDF

Teaching Notes:

There is some dense/legalistic language in this law that will take some time to deconstruct with students.



VIDEO: REFLECTIONS ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA (ON PBS NEWSHOUR IN 2015)

Teaching Notes:

The entire 15 minute video provides a broader reflection on the ADA (more than just employment). Much of the video is a group interview with Judy Heumann, Tatyana McFadden, and Representative Jim Langevin, who are all disabled.

Shorter clips:

-22:20 – 23:25: overview of continued employment discrepancies

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-525-1c1td9p224?start=1340.74&end=1404.99>

-30 – 32:31: Judy Heumann & Congressman Langevin talk about barriers & ways to increase employment; Langevin mentions fears around loss of personal care attendant & healthcare

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-525-1c1td9p224?start=1801.36&end=1953.42>

(For more on the concerns around losing healthcare due to employment see this [NPR obit for Paul Longmore](#))