



Complex Child E-Magazine

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Obama and McCain on Disability

The intent of this article is to provide an unbiased look at the major presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, and their respective positions and record on disability issues.

In general, the information found below has been taken from the candidates' websites, their statements given at the AAPD Disability Forum this past August, and the United States Senate website for information on past votes in the Senate.

Issues related to disability rights are currently at an incredibly important crossroads. The rights that have been established under the Americans with Disabilities Act have been greatly restricted by the Supreme Court over the past few years. The United States has yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a comprehensive international statement of civil rights for people with disabilities. Other issues, including allowing people with disabilities to live in the community instead of in institutions (Community Choice Act), ensuring the right of people with disabilities to vote (Help America Vote Act), and improving access to technology (Fostering Independence through Technology Act), are currently being assessed by legislators in our Senate and House of Representatives.

The following information represents the positions on these issues by Barack Obama and John McCain.

Side-by-Side Positions on Disability Issues

issue	BARACK OBAMA	JOHN McCAIN
Whether the US should sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Will sign, and urges congress to ratify ¹	Has not expressed a position
ADA Restoration Act , which restores the broad scope of the original Americans with Disabilities Act to people with conditions like epilepsy or cancer	Supports, cosponsor ¹	Supports, cosponsor ²
Increased hiring of People with Disabilities in the federal government	Supports ¹	Has not expressed a position
Community Choice Act that allows people with disabilities to move from institutional settings to community settings	Supports ¹	Opposes. “The primary thing is that we have to pay for [this legislation],” and “I want us not to lay this burden on the next generation of Americans.” But says he “support(s) the concept and will pursue efforts for community choice.” ²
Fair Home Health Care Act that provides a minimum wage and overtime protection for home health workers	Supports ¹	Has not expressed a position
Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act that creates a national disability insurance program funded by optional payroll deductions	Supports, cosponsor ¹	Has not expressed a position
Help America Vote Act , providing voting options for people of all abilities	Supports ¹	Supports ³
Fostering Independence through Technology Act , providing access to technology, such as home monitoring and communication, for people with disabilities	Supports ¹	Has not expressed a position

Barack Obama

“We must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination.... policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities.”¹

“Obama’s comprehensive agenda to empower individuals with disabilities fits in with the campaign’s overarching message of equalizing opportunities for all Americans.

In addition to reclaiming America's global leadership on this issue by becoming a signatory to--and having the Senate ratify--the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan has four parts, designed to provide lifelong supports and resources to Americans with disabilities. They are as follows:

First, provide Americans with disabilities with the educational opportunities they need to succeed. Second, end discrimination and promote equal opportunity. Third, increase the employment rate of workers with disabilities. And fourth, support independent, community-based living for Americans with disabilities.”¹

- **Disability Issue Page and Video:**
<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/disabilities/>
- **Disability Platform:**
<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/DisabilityPlanFactSheet.pdf>
- **Americans with Disabilities Webpage:**
<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/dahome/>
- **AAPD Forum Questionnaire:**
<http://www.aapd.com/News/election/070604sbo.htm>
- **Statement on the 18th Anniversary of the ADA:**
<http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/stateupdates/gGxyMI>

John McCain

“[People with disabilities] extend the promise of America to more citizens. You afford people with disabilities the chance to put their talents and great gifts to use and America is richer for it. Along the way, I've been proud to count myself a friend to the cause of equal opportunity for all Americans with or without a disability. And so often what these reforms and laws established were standards of simple fairness and consideration.

In recent memory, the greatest step forward for the cause was the Americans with Disabilities Act, of which I was a principal co-sponsor. And for all the good that law has brought into millions of lives, more work remains to be done. In reauthorizing the ADA, we must remove all doubt that the law is intended to protect Americans from any kind of discrimination on the basis of a physical or mental disability. And we must clarify the definition of a disability, to assure full protection for those the law is intended to serve.

I will work to enact legislation that would build on the principles of the Money Follows the Person Initiative, while also keeping my commitment to a responsible budget. The offer of assistance in living with a disability should not come with the condition of perpetual confinement to an institutional setting. The great goal here should be to increase choices, to expand freedom, to open doors, and to allow citizens with disabilities to live where they want and to go where they wish.”²

- **Disability Platform:** none
- **Americans with Disabilities Webpage:**
<http://americanswithdisabilities.johnmccain.com/AmericansWithDisabilities.htm>
- **AAPD Forum Questionnaire:** did not complete
- **Disability Statement for AAPD Forum:**
<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/News/Speeches/Read.aspx?guid=7a7d4e10-8907-4ff6-b4f2-8662b2d978a6>

¹ Barack Obama's website, www.barackobama.com

² AAPD National Forum Transcripts:
<http://www.aapd.com/News/election/080726forumtrans.htm>

³ John McCain's website, www.johnmccain.com

⁴ <http://www.senate.gov>