

Address to Kareem Dale, President Obama's Disability Policy Advisor on Aug 27 2009
By James Rapp

Hello, my name is James Rapp. I work as a youth mentor and Community Action Specialist here at the disAbility Resource Center. I would like to discuss employment and economic empowerment for the people with disabilities.

I understand that the economy is not good right now and some businesses have laid off employees. This makes it very difficult for people with disabilities to get and keep employment. In 2006, Amy Joyce, a Washington Post writer, said, only 32 percent of Americans with disabilities aged 18 to 64 are working, but two thirds of the 68 percent who are unemployed would rather be working. This needs to change. Without employment, people with disabilities cannot support themselves, live independently, and pay taxes.

In addition to employment, vocational rehabilitation is important to people with disabilities, and it should be kept available to the disability community. Vocational rehabilitation helps people with disabilities learn or regain skills to become employed. I am able to work here because I was able to receive vocational rehabilitation.

Also, I'd like to ask President Obama to support the Equity for Injured Veterans Act of 2009, HR 1821, introduced by Californian Representative Bob Fliner on March 31st, 2009. This bill helps to increase vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits for veterans. It is hard for veterans to return back to their lives and routines, including taking care of their families, after they fought and became disabled.

Services that enable people with disabilities to get and keep jobs are important. Services like these have helped me personally with employment. I encourage you and President Obama to support employment and vocational rehabilitation issues and other issues of concern to people with disabilities. Thank you.