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## **The Presidential Candidates and People with Disabilities**

We believe the most important thing voters can do in this presidential campaign season is acquaint themselves with the policies and proposals of both candidates on the issues of concern to Americans. One such important issue pertains to the resources available to persons with disabilities, the rights of such persons, and the laws protecting those rights.

The following information was obtained from our review of the following sources: the platform information on the campaign websites of John McCain ([www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)) and Barack Obama ([www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)); internet search for information about the candidates' disabilities policies; and information disseminated by the Obama Campaign (as to the comparisons of the candidates' positions on various issues). We are glad to forward additional information about these issues received from either campaign when it is received. Readers are strongly encouraged to visit the websites of both candidates for facts and information about their stands on this and other crucial issues.

### **OBAMA ON SUPPORT FOR LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE COMMUNITY**

Obama is a co-sponsor of the Community Choice Act of 2007. Obama believes that individuals should be able to make their own choices for their living arrangements and live independently in their communities. [S.799, 110th Congress]

Obama is a co-sponsor of the Community Living Assistance Services and Support (CLASS) Act Of 2007. This bill would help individuals with functional impairments pay for services that they need to maximize their independence. [S.1758, 110th Congress]

Obama believes the federal government should encourage states to enforce the rights affirmed in the *Olmstead v. LC* court decision, which required states to place persons with disabilities in community settings where treatment professionals determine that community placement is appropriate.

Obama supports the Fair Home Health Care Act which would extend minimum wage and overtime protections to direct care attendants. He would commit the federal government to enforcing Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines for preventing employer discrimination against family members because of caregiving responsibilities.

## **McCain on Support for Living Independently in the Community**

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain opposes the Community Choice Act. Asked about the Community Choice Act at a Town Hall in Denver, McCain said "The Community Choice Act is not a piece of legislation that I support." [McCain Town Hall, 7/7/08]

## **Obama on Education for Individuals with Disabilities**

Barack Obama supports full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) at the originally approved 40% of each state's "excess cost" of educating children with disabilities (rather than the 17% currently provided), early intervention and developmental programs, and expanded college opportunities for students with disabilities.

Obama voted for over \$44 billion in funding for the IDEA. [SCR 21, Senate Vote #94, 3/22/07]

Obama will invest \$10 billion per year in early intervention, educational and developmental programs for children between zero and five. His plan will expand programs such as Early Head Start to serve more children with disabilities and will encourage states to expand programs for children with disabilities, such as IDEA Part C. [Obama Plan to Empower Americans with Disabilities, <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/DisabilityPlanFactSheet.pdf>]

Obama supports increasing opportunities for college students with disabilities and providing more support for these college students. Obama was an original co-sponsor of the Senate bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (S. 1642) which significantly expands opportunities and supports for individuals with disabilities to attend college and graduate programs. [S.1642, 110th Congress]

## **McCain on Education for Individuals with Disabilities**

(From Obama campaign information)

John McCain has voted against the IDEA and funding for special education even though he claims he supports full funding of it.

McCain voted against funding increases for the IDEA. [H.R.4577, Senate Vote #170, 6/30/00; SCR 23, Senate Vote #103, 3/26/03]

McCain voted against increasing spending in the amount of \$229 billion over 10 years for the IDEA. McCain also voted against an amendment that would create a reserve fund of \$73 billion in IDEA funding. The spending would have been made possible by reducing tax cuts. [SCR 23, Senate Vote #103, 3/26/03; SCR 23, Senate Vote #70, 3/21/03]

McCain did not co-sponsor reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (S. 1642). He also did not vote on passage of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in the 110th Congress. [S.1642, 110th Congress; S. 1642, Senate Vote #275, 7/24/07]

### **OBAMA ON SOCIAL SERVICES SPENDING**

Obama opposes a freeze on social services spending for people with disabilities.

Obama voted against capping non-defense spending which means that social service spending for people with disabilities could continue to meet their needs. In 2005, Obama voted against the Inhofe amendment that would cap non-defense, non-trust fund spending. [S.1932, Senate Vote #286, 11/3/05]

### **McCAIN ON SOCIAL SERVICES SPENDING**

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain promises that he will cap non-defense spending for at least one year, meaning that social services spending for people with disabilities will be capped as well.

McCain voted in favor of capping non-defense spending. In 2005, McCain voted for the Inhofe amendment that would cap non-defense and non-trust fund spending. [S.1932, Senate Vote #286, 11/3/05]

McCain proposed a freeze of discretionary spending as illustrated when he said, "As president, I will also order a prompt and thorough review of the budgets of every federal program, department, and agency. While that top-to-bottom review is underway, we will institute a one-year pause in discretionary spending increases with the necessary exemption of military spending and veterans' benefits." [McCain Remarks on the Economy at Carnegie Mellon University, 4/15/08]

### **OBAMA ON HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

Obama will sign universal health care into law by the end of his first term in office, and he has supported expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program ("SCHIP") and health care programs for people with disabilities, children, and veterans.

Under Obama's plan to provide universal health insurance, insurance companies will not be able to stop individuals from getting coverage even if they have pre-existing conditions and disabilities. Obama's plan allows individuals and businesses to purchase public or private health coverage through a national health insurance exchange. Obama's plan would make health care more affordable and accessible to all Americans, particularly individuals who have been denied coverage in the private market due to a pre-existing condition or disability. [Obama Plan to Empower Individuals with Disabilities]

Obama is a co-sponsor of ending the Medicare Waiting Period Act of 2007 (S.2102). Before they can get Medicare coverage, people with disabilities must first receive Social Security

Disability Insurance (SSDI) for 24 months. Due to the 24-month Medicare waiting period, an estimated 400,000 Americans with disabilities are uninsured and many more are underinsured at a time in their lives when they need health coverage the most. During this waiting period, many individuals develop secondary conditions, their health status worsens and many die. Obama supports legislation that would phase out this harmful waiting period and provide individuals with health insurance. [S.2102, 110th Congress]

Obama supported expanded health insurance for children. In 2007, Obama voted to reauthorize the SCHIP at over \$60 billion for five years. Two children who live with a single parent who makes \$51,510 would have access to health insurance coverage under SCHIP. The bill would provide \$100 million in new grants to fund state outreach and enrollment efforts and allocate \$49 million for a demonstration project to streamline the enrollment process for low-income children already eligible for coverage. [HR 976, Senate Vote #307, 8/2/07]

Obama supported assuring accessible health care to people with disabilities by co-sponsoring the Promoting Wellness for Individuals with Disabilities Act (S.1050) The bill would require the U.S. Access Board to establish access standards for all diagnostic equipment (examination tables, x-ray, mammography and other radiological equipment, etc.). It also educates physicians and dentists by requiring that medical schools, dental schools, and their residency programs provide training to improve competency and clinical skills in providing care to patients with disabilities (including those with intellectual disabilities) as a condition of receiving federal funds. Finally, it establishes a national wellness grant program which will authorize funding for programs or activities for smoking cessation, weight control, nutrition or fitness that are tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities and authorize funding for preventive health screening programs for individuals with disabilities to reduce the incidence of secondary conditions. [S.1050, 110th Congress]

#### Obama supported expanding health care for veterans.

In 2005, Obama voted for providing an additional \$500 million per year for the next five years for mental health services for veterans. [S.2020, Senate Vote #343, 11/17/05]

In 2006, Obama voted in favor of adding \$430 million for outpatient and inpatient health care and treatment for veterans. Nearly half of the military servicemen and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan will require health care services for the physical and psychological traumas of war, yet the Bush administration and Republican-led Congress have underfunded the Veterans Administration's medical services by at least \$1.2 billion for 2007 alone. And, this was the second consecutive year they had done so. [H.R.4939, Senate Vote #98, 4/26/06; The Independent Budget, A Budget for Veterans by Veterans, 2/10/06; Newsweek, 1/19/06]

Obama voted to grant access to Medicaid for Hurricane Katrina victims for up to five months. The bill would have provided full federal funding for Medicaid in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for up to one year and provided \$800 million to help people who were caring for Katrina evacuees. [S.1932, Senate Vote #285, 11/3/05]

Obama voted for \$2 million for research of traumatic brain injuries to improve imaging for traumatic brain injury testing and adapting current technologies to treat brain injuries suffered in war. [H.R.5631, S. Amdt. 4781, Senate Vote #222, 8/2/06; CQ, 8/2/06]

## **McCain ON HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

The following statement is from the John McCain website general Health Care issue plank:

“John McCain Will Reform Health Care Making It Easier For Individuals And Families To Obtain Insurance. An important part of his plan is to use competition to improve the quality of health insurance with greater variety to match people's needs, lower prices, and portability. Families should be able to purchase health insurance nationwide, across state lines.

John McCain Will Reform The Tax Code To Offer More Choices Beyond Employer-Based Health Insurance Coverage. While still having the option of employer-based coverage, every family will receive a direct refundable tax credit - effectively cash - of \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families to offset the cost of insurance. Families will be able to choose the insurance provider that suits them best and the money would be sent directly to the insurance provider. Those obtaining innovative insurance that costs less than the credit can deposit the remainder in expanded Health Savings Accounts.

John McCain Proposes Making Insurance More Portable. Americans need insurance that follows them from job to job. They want insurance that is still there if they retire early and does not change if they take a few years off to raise the kids.

John McCain Will Encourage And Expand The Benefits Of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) For Families. When families are informed about medical choices, they are more capable of making their own decisions and often decide against unnecessary options. Health Savings Accounts take an important step in the direction of putting families in charge of what they pay for.

John McCain understands that those without prior group coverage and those with pre-existing conditions have the most difficulty on the individual market, and we need to make sure they get the high-quality coverage they need.

John McCain Will Work With States To Establish A Guaranteed Access Plan. As President, John McCain will work with governors to develop a best practice model that states can follow - a Guaranteed Access Plan or GAP - that would reflect the best experience of the states to ensure these patients have access to health coverage. One approach would establish a nonprofit corporation that would contract with insurers to cover patients who have been denied insurance and could join with other state plans to enlarge pools and lower overhead costs. There would be reasonable limits on premiums, and assistance would be available for Americans below a certain income level.

John McCain Will Promote Proper Incentives. John McCain will work with Congress, the governors, and industry to make sure this approach is funded adequately and has the right

incentives to reduce costs such as disease management, individual case management, and health and wellness programs.”

([www.johnmccain.com/informing/issues](http://www.johnmccain.com/informing/issues))

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain's health care plan does not prohibit discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions and disabilities. McCain's healthcare plan would replace the existing tax exclusion for employer-sponsored health coverage with a refundable tax credit for all Americans as an incentive to purchase health insurance. However, many individuals with disabilities are denied coverage or unable to afford coverage in the private market due to pre-existing conditions and disabilities. While McCain's plan would work with states to develop best practice models in expanding coverage to individuals who have been denied coverage, it would not prohibit discrimination. [Washington Post, 4/30/08]

McCain opposed reauthorizing SCHIP and providing insurance for millions of uninsured children. According to Knight Ridder, "The [2007] Senate proposal would provide coverage to 3.2 million" uninsured children and renew coverage for the 6 million children already covered by the program. The legislation passed 68-31. [H.R. 976, Vote #307, 8/2/07; Knight Ridder, 8/2/07]

McCain voted against \$2 million of funding for research of traumatic brain injuries. McCain rejected legislation that would help improve imaging for traumatic brain injury testing and adapting current technologies to treat brain injuries suffered in war. [H.R.5631, S. Amdt. 4781, Senate Vote #222, 8/2/06; CQ, 8/2/06]

#### McCain position on health care for veterans.

(From McCain website)

“John McCain believes that America's veterans who dedicated themselves to protecting our country deserve the highest quality health care. He is committed to ensuring that veterans' health care programs receive the funding necessary to provide the quality health care our veterans need and deserve. He has worked to ensure that the Veteran's Affairs provides care for all eligible veterans, no matter where they live or what they need. In addition, John McCain has fought to ensure that retired servicemen and women have meaningful access to affordable health care.

**Funding Veterans' Health Care.** John McCain has voted repeatedly, throughout his career, to ensure that the Veteran's Affairs health care programs receive the funding necessary to serve our veterans. He has supported numerous funding increases, initiatives to make the VA more efficient, and proposals to give higher pay to VA doctors in order to recruit and retain high quality physicians and dentists.

**Expanding Veterans' Access to Health Care.** John McCain has worked to ensure that geography does not prevent veterans from receiving the care they have earned. He supported measures to allow veterans in remote areas of Alaska to get care at existing facilities run by the Indian Health Service or tribal organizations. He also rallied support for a demonstration

project to send mobile health centers to remote locations where veterans need care. In addition, he sponsored legislation that would ensure that health care funding is distributed fairly, and that eligible veterans in all regions of the country can equally access high quality health care.

**Serving the Special Health Care Needs of Veterans.** John McCain understands that veterans face a broad array of health challenges, many of which disproportionately afflict our former service members. He has fought to ensure that veterans receive health care that reflects their unique needs. For this reason, John McCain advocated for guaranteeing health benefits to veterans who have been exposed to radiation. He also worked to advance studies on the health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and to give disability benefits to veterans with cancer and other health problems caused by Agent Orange. He supported efforts to provide veterans with treatment for tobacco related illnesses and substance abuse problems, and he sponsored legislation to cover mental health care in military retiree health plans. John McCain has also been a leading advocate for providing veterans with hospice benefits.

**Health Care for Retired Veterans.** John McCain believes that all military retirees, even if they are not eligible for VA health care, should be provided with meaningful access to health care. The federal government should ease the burden of health care costs on those people who have dedicated their careers to protecting our freedom. He has supported allowing military retirees to remain eligible for CHAMPUS or TRICARE military health care programs even when they reach the age of 65 and are eligible for Medicare. He has also consistently supported efforts to give military retirees tax breaks to help pay health insurance premiums, and he has opposed placing user fees on military retirees for using military medical facilities.

(From Obama campaign information)

In 2005, McCain voted against providing an additional \$500 million per year for the next five years for mental health services for veterans. [S.2020, Senate Vote #343, 11/17/05]

In 2006, McCain was one of 13 senators who voted against adding \$430 million for outpatient and inpatient health care and treatment for veterans. Amendment passed 84-16. [H.R.4939, Vote #98, 4/26/06]

McCain voted against granting access to Medicaid for Hurricane Katrina victims for up to five months. The Bill would have provided full federal funding for Medicaid in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for up to one year and provided \$800 million to help people who were caring for Katrina evacuees. [S.1932, Senate Vote #285, 11/3/05]

McCain has not co-sponsored the Promoting Wellness for Individuals with Disabilities Act (S.1050)

## **OBAMA ON CIVIL RIGHTS FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

Obama strongly supports the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Restoration Act. Indeed, he signed on as an original co-sponsor of the Senate version of the ADA Restoration Act. [S.1050, 110th Congress]

Obama will appoint judges who exhibit empathy for individuals with disabilities. "Barack Obama will appoint judges and justices who respect Congress' role as a co-equal, democratically elected branch of government and who exhibit empathy with what it means to be an American with a disability" [Obama Plan To Empower Individuals With Disabilities]

### **McCain ON CIVIL RIGHTS FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

(From July 26, 2008 MSNBC website article)

“Republican presidential candidate John McCain is pledging support for a proposal to expand protections for disabled people under an 18-year-old landmark civil rights law. Speaking from Arizona by satellite to a disabilities forum in Columbus, Ohio, McCain said Saturday that revisions to the Americans With Disabilities Act must leave no doubt that it was intended to protect from any discrimination based on physical or mental disabilities.

The Supreme Court generally has exempted from the law's protection people with partial physical disabilities, as well as people with physical impairments that can be treated with medication or devices such as hearing aids.

“We must clarify the definition of a disability to assure full protection for those the law is intended to serve,” said McCain, who was spending the weekend at his nearby northern Arizona getaway.

A month ago, the House passed a bill to extend protections to people who take medicine to control epilepsy, diabetes or cancer, or use prosthetic limbs. McCain, a co-sponsor of the 1990 law, said he intends to support a similar bill in the Senate. McCain said blame for the narrowed scope of the law shouldn't be placed on the Supreme Court, but rather on Congress. "In all due respect, I would put the blame right back on us for not writing legislation that is strong enough and specific enough so that the Supreme Court wouldn't even have to consider these cases," McCain said.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, who was headed back to the United States from an international trip and didn't attend the forum, has said he supports the bill so that it could override court decisions that narrowed the law's scope. Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin, an Obama surrogate who helped write the 1990 law, also spoke at the forum.”

[\[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25865260/\]](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25865260/)

(From Obama campaign information)

While McCain has also co-sponsored the ADA Restoration Act, he has promised to appoint judges like those who interpreted the ADA narrowly and deprived millions of people with disabilities of their civil rights. McCain said that as president, he would "appoint strict

constructionist judges." [AP, 8/7/07] "In an address at Wake Forest University, McCain pledged to nominate jurists who believe 'there are clear limits to the scope of judicial power'...By way of example, McCain said he would look for people in the cast of Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., and his friend the late Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist. He called them 'jurists of the highest caliber who know their own minds, and know the law, and know the difference.'" [Los Angeles Times, 5/7/08]

### **OBAMA ON MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY**

In 2007, Obama voted against increasing Medicare Part D premiums for beneficiaries making over \$80,000 annually. Obama voted against the Ensign Amendment that would require Medicare prescription drugs beneficiaries with annual incomes over \$80,000 and couples with annual incomes over \$160,000 to pay a larger share of their Medicare Part D premium. [SCR 21, Senate Vote #93, 3/22/07]

Obama opposed means testing for Medicare. In response to a NCPSSM questionnaire, Obama said, "The bill added 'means testing' to Part B of Medicare, requiring individuals with incomes over \$80,000 to pay gradually higher premiums. This undermines the basic premise of Medicare as an insurance program for all Americans and could cause wealthier and healthier people to leave the Medicare program." [NCPSSM Questionnaire; Citizen Action Illinois Questionnaire, SEIU Questionnaire]

### **McCAIN ON MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY**

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain voted to raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67. In 1997, McCain voted in favor of raising the eligibility age for receiving Medicare from 65 to 67 with the change being phased in between 2003 and 2027. The motion passed 62-38. [S 947, Vote #112, 6/24/97]

### **OBAMA ON MENTAL HEALTH PARITY**

Obama is a long-time supporter of mental health parity legislation, having passed the Illinois Mental Health Parity Law. He also co-sponsored the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007. Obama co-sponsored a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and the Public Health Service Act to require a group health plan that provides both medical and surgical benefits and mental health benefits to ensure that: (1) the financial requirements applicable to such mental health benefits are no more restrictive than those of substantially all medical and surgical benefits covered by the plan, including deductibles and copayments; and (2) the treatment limitations applicable to such mental health benefits are no more restrictive than those applied to substantially all medical and surgical benefits covered by the plan, including limits on the frequency of treatments or similar limits on the scope or duration of treatment. The bill prohibited the plan from establishing separate cost sharing requirements that are applicable only with respect to mental health benefits. [110th, S.558, Introduced 2/12/07; HELP Report, 4/11/07]

Obama co-sponsored and voted for a mental health parity bill that requires coverage for serious mental illnesses to be provided on the same terms and conditions as other illnesses and diseases. [92nd GA; SB 1341; 2001; Signed into law 7/27/01, PA 92-0185]

### **McCain ON MENTAL HEALTH PARITY**

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain's health care plan would eliminate the mental health parity requirements in 45 states. [Wall Street Journal, 10/11/07; SOURCE: National Conference of State Legislatures (<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/hmolaws.htm>), accessed 7/30/07; Council for Affordable Health Insurance, accessed 7/30/07

([http://www.cahi.org/cahi\\_contents/resources/pdf/MandatePub2007.pdf](http://www.cahi.org/cahi_contents/resources/pdf/MandatePub2007.pdf))]

### **Obama ON AUTISM**

Obama will increase federal funding for outreach and support services for people on the autism spectrum. Specifically, "Obama will seek to increase federal ASD funding for research, treatment, screenings, public awareness, and support services to \$1 billion annually by the end of his first term in office. Obama will also continue to work with parents, physicians, providers, researchers, and schools to create opportunities and effective solutions for people with ASD." [Obama Plan Supporting Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorders] Obama is a co-sponsor of the Expanding the Promise to Individuals with Autism Act (S.937) which would improve services and supports for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their families. It would build upon programs within the Developmental Disabilities Act to increase interdisciplinary training of professionals, development and dissemination of evidence-based autism treatments, interventions, supports and services for children and adults, and protection and advocacy. [S.937, 110th Congress]

### **McCain ON AUTISM**

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain has not taken a leading role to expand services and supports for people with autism. McCain has not co-sponsored the Expanding the Promise to Individuals with Autism Act (S.937). [S.937, 110th Congress]

(From McCain website)

McCain says he will work to advance federal autism research. The following is the McCain Statement on Combating Autism in America from his website:

“John McCain is very concerned about the rising incidence of autism among America's children and has continually supported research into its causes and treatment. He has heard countless stories about families' hardships obtaining a diagnosis for their children's autism and accessing quality medical treatment. He believes that federal research efforts should support broad approaches to understanding the factors that may play a role in the incidence of autism, including factors in our environment, for both prevention and treatment purposes.

John McCain was proud to lend his support to the Combating Autism Act of 2006, which he cosponsored, and worked to ensure its enactment. This law is helping to increase public awareness and screening of autism spectrum disorder, promote the use of evidence-based interventions, and create autism Centers of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder Research and Epidemiology. John McCain understands that despite the federal and scientific research efforts to date, the exact causes of autism are not yet known and greater research is needed to understand this disorder. That is why in November 2007, he joined with Senator Lieberman in requesting the leadership of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal research into autism, to hold a hearing on federal research efforts regarding factors affecting incidence and treatment in order to help determine where research efforts can best be directed. As President, John McCain will work to advance federal research into autism, promote early screening, and identify better treatment options, while providing support for children with autism so that they may reach their full potential.” [[www.johnmccain.com/content](http://www.johnmccain.com/content)]

### **OBAMA ON VOTING RIGHTS FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

Obama supports fully funding the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) so that we can ensure all polling places are accessible. His administration would also assure better enforcement of federal disability rights laws - from HAVA to the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act to the ADA - to make sure the right of Americans with disabilities to vote is fully protected. [Obama Plan to Empower Individuals with Disabilities]

### **McCAIN ON VOTING RIGHTS FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

(From Obama campaign information)

In 2002, McCain voted repeatedly against the Help America Vote Act, which was offered to correct problems in the election system and impose detailed voting-procedure requirements on the states. McCain voted for final passage of the bill. [S.565, Senate Vote #39, 3/1/02; S.565, Senate Vote #Vote 40, 3/4/02; H.R.3295, Senate Vote #238, 10/16/02]

### **OBAMA ON VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Disabled America Veterans (DAV) gave Obama an 80% rating in 2006. [Project Vote Smart]

Obama supports strengthened specialty care within the Veterans' Administration, including Centers of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), PTSD, prosthetics, spinal cord injury, women's health and other specialized rehabilitative care, and has cosponsored a bipartisan measure encouraging students specializing in vision care and rehabilitation to work in the VA. [<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/DisabilityPlanFactSheet.pdf>]

### **McCAIN ON VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES**

The following statement is from the McCain website)

“Caring for Our Disabled Veterans. John McCain has been a leading advocate in the Senate for disabled veterans throughout his entire career. He fought for nearly fifteen years, introducing numerous bills, to ensure that veterans with service-connected disabilities can receive the retirement benefits that they have earned, as well as the disability compensation benefits that they are entitled to. He has also worked to ensure that veterans can have their disability claims processed in a timely manner, working with the VA to rectify its huge backlog of claims and providing additional resources for that purpose.

John McCain believes very strongly that service members who suffered permanent injuries in service to our nation should not be forced to give up their disability compensation in order to collect their retirement pay. For this reason, John McCain has been a staunch supporter of repealing the historic ban on receiving both disability and retirement pay at the same time. Over the past few years, John McCain has successfully pushed for provisions to compensate disabled retired veterans for this disparity. Now, because of his efforts, veterans with severe combat-related disabilities are able to collect their retirement and disability compensation at the same time. John McCain will continue to fight for equal treatment of disabled veterans under the retirement system. In an effort to help disabled veterans with their health care, he cosponsored a measure to allow disabled veterans to be enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, the same health insurance offered to Senators and Congressmen. He has also supported higher payments to disabled veterans and survivors of veterans who died because of service connected injuries.

John McCain has worked to increase VA resources for paralysis research, and he spearheaded an effort to establish a Blind Rehabilitation Center in Tucson, Arizona to help the 1,200 vets on waiting lists for rehab services for the blind.”

(From Obama campaign information)

McCain voted with the Disabled American Veterans 20% of the time. (Factcheck.org: "However, he is correct in that McCain doesn't have a perfect score with DAV (Disabled American Veterans), a group of 1.3 million disabled veterans that supports more funding for veterans health care. McCain has a 20 percent record of voting the way DAV would like him to in 2006...Senators were evaluated on five votes for amendments that would have increased funding for veterans' health care.") [Factcheck.org]