

PRESS RELEASE

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PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FORUM DRAWS LARGE CROWD OF UNDECIDED NH VOTERS

MANCHESTER, NH – More than 600 New Hampshire undecided voters, the majority of whom are also individuals living with disabilities, representing a consortium of non-partisan national and local groups hosted several presidential candidates from both parties on Friday, allowing the candidates a chance to outline their priorities firsthand to the people they will most affect.

Hosted by Granite State Independent Living, the daylong forum featured appearances by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), Senator Mike Gravel (D-AK), and Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio). Senator John McCain (R-AZ) called in to the event, while John Edwards' campaign manager and former Michigan Congressman David Bonior addressed the crowd in Edwards' absence. All candidates were invited and encouraged to speak.

"The audience attending this forum, and those watching across the country on the web all represent American voters," said Clyde Terry CEO, Granite State Independent Living. "According to the U.S. Census, one in five adults between the age of 18 and 64 have a disability, one in nine children, and one in two over the age of 65. So when you count not only individuals with disabilities, but their families, friends, care givers, educators and others, the discussions that occur at this forum are the issues that either are or will challenge all American families at some point in their lives."

Priorities for the groups sponsoring today's forum include the appointment of a new and permanent Assistant to the President for Disability Policy at the White House; support for an increase in access to home and community-based long-term care services that will maximize independence; increased employment outcomes by hiring more people with disabilities in the federal workforce and reforming Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income to eliminate disincentives to work; improve the

transition to work; increase access to affordable health insurance for all Americans; and promote and increase accessible affordable housing and transportation.

“The disability community will continue to push our priorities to ensure that all Americans can achieve the American Dream,” said Andrew Imparato, president and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). “Today’s event was a clear indication that America has a bright future.”

Historically, polls have shown that members of the disability community vote in presidential elections based on issues of importance, rather than party affiliation. With that in mind, candidates appearing today essentially spoke to the more than 50 million Americans represented by the sponsoring groups.

Today’s forum used innovative technology to make the event accessible for voters who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, as well as voters nationwide. In addition to live American Sign Language interpretation at the event, the forum offered Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) for attendees from a translator over 1,200 miles away via the Internet. A webcast was accessible to voters nationwide, and the event will be available for download on Manchester Community Television’s website.

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