

# Rehabilitation Act

Advancing Access and Equity  
Then, Now, and Next

# 50<sup>th</sup>

# 1973-2023

OFFICE OF FEDERAL CONTRACT  
COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

History of  
OFCCP's  
Section 503  
Regulations

OFFICE OF FEDERAL CONTRACT  
COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

# August 3, 1954

On **August 3, 1954**, the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments Act of 1954 established a formal relationship between the Secretary of Labor; Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare; and the chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped to promote job opportunities and job placement of “handicapped individuals” who received rehabilitation services under state vocational rehabilitation programs.





## September 26, 1973

On **September 26, 1973**, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 replaced the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 503) required Federal contracts in excess of \$2,500 to include a provision requiring the contractor to “take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified handicapped individuals.” The law also provided that “if any handicapped individual believes any contractor has failed or refuses to comply with the provisions of this contract with the United States, relating to employment of handicapped individuals, such individual may file a complaint with the Department of Labor.”







January 15, 1974


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On **January 15, 1974**, President Nixon signed Executive Order 11758, which delegated rulemaking authority under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to the Secretary of Labor.



# June 11, 1974

On **June 11, 1974**, OFCCP published its first regulations implementing Section 503.







## December 7, 1974

On **December 7, 1974**, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1974 amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 by expanding the definition of “handicapped individual” to include “any person who (A) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person’s major life activities, (B) has a record of such an impairment, or (C) is regarded as having such an impairment.”

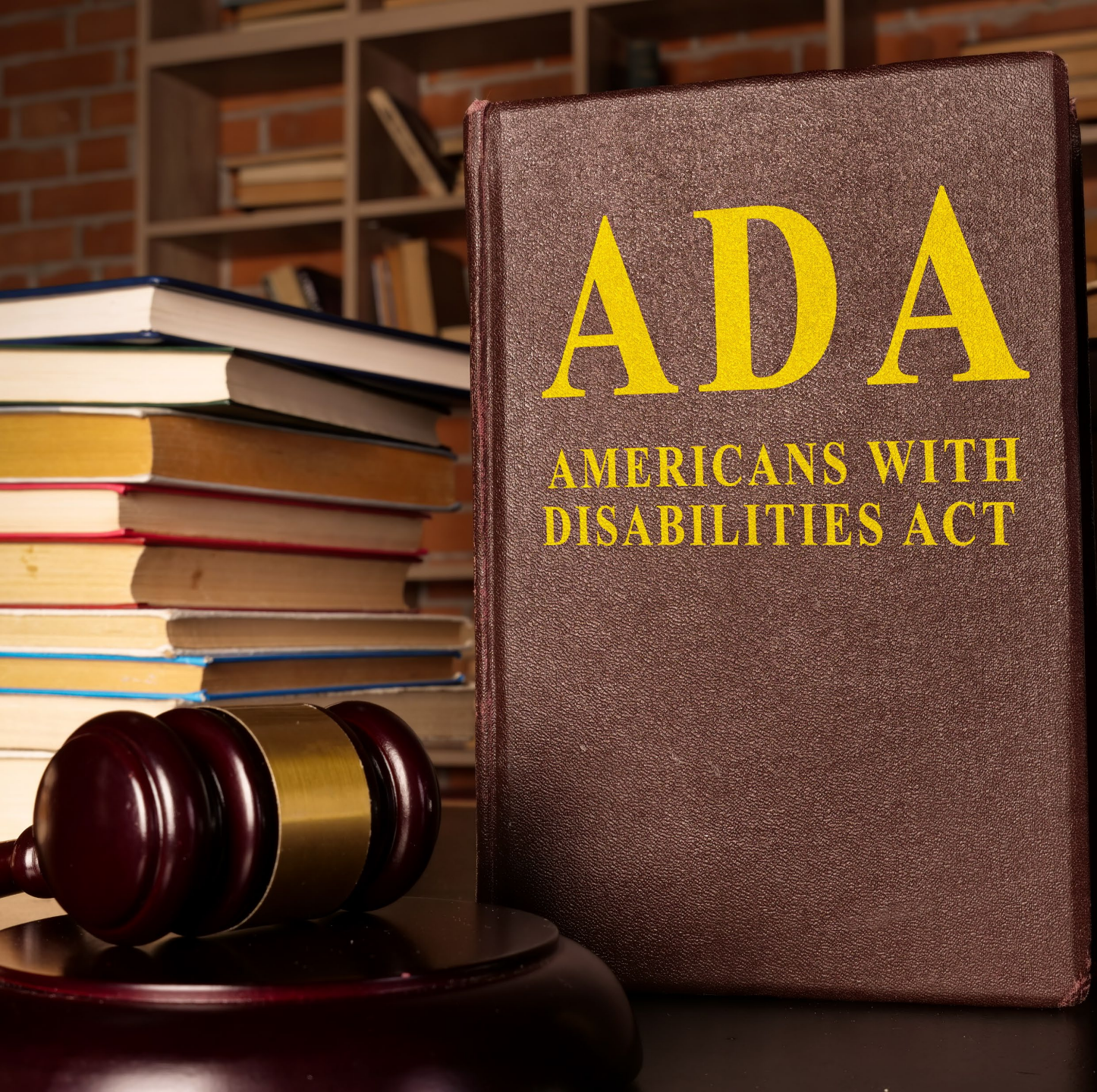


A close-up photograph of a person's hand touching a document with Braille text. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with the index finger pointing towards the top of the page. The document is white with black Braille characters. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the document and a blue and white checkered shirt sleeve at the bottom left. The overall lighting is soft and even.

April 16, 1976

On **April 16, 1976**, OFCCP revised the Section 503 regulations to incorporate the 1974 amendments.






## July 26, 1990

On **July 26, 1990**, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. OFCCP follows ADA principles when enforcing its Section 503 regulations.





January 24, 1992

On **January 24, 1992**, OFCCP and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) published a joint final rule establishing procedures for processing complaints that fall within the overlapping jurisdiction of both Title I of the ADA and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.



# October 29, 1992

On **October 29, 1992**, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 amended the act's general jurisdictional provisions by raising the contract dollar amount threshold for covering a contractor from "in excess of \$2,500" to "in excess of \$10,000" and by removing a provision in Section 503 of the act limiting its coverage to the contractor's positions that are engaged in work related to Government contracts. Additionally, the 1992 legislation substituted the term "disability" for the term "handicap" throughout the Rehabilitation Act, matching the terminology used in the ADA.





# May 1, 1996

On **May 1, 1996**, OFCCP published revised regulations implementing Section 503. OFCCP revised the regulations to conform to the nondiscrimination provisions to the regulations published by the EEOC implementing Title I of the ADA; to incorporate the 1992 amendments to Section 503; and to strengthen and clarify existing provisions relating to affirmative action, recordkeeping, enforcement, and other issues.



# August 7, 1998

On **August 7, 1998**, President Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which included amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The amendments improved access to local and state workforce development programs for individuals with disabilities.





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## September 25, 2008

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On **September 25, 2008**, President George W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) into law. The ADAAA made significant changes to the ADA's definition of "disability" that broadened the scope of coverage under both the ADA and section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.



# September 24, 2013

On **September 24, 2013**, OFCCP revised the regulations implementing Section 503. These revisions strengthened the affirmative action provisions by, among other things, requiring data collection pertaining to applicants and hires with disabilities, and establishing a utilization goal for individuals with disabilities to assist in measuring the effectiveness of the contractor's affirmative action efforts. To implement changes necessitated by the passage of the ADAAA, the final rule also adopted revisions to the definitions and to the nondiscrimination provisions of the implementing regulations.





# History of Disability Rights

Rehabilitation Act  
Advancing Access and Equity  
Then, Now, and Next

50<sup>th</sup>

1973-2023



1954

AUGUST  
3<sup>RD</sup>

Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Amendments Act  
of 1954

1973

SEPTEMBER  
26<sup>TH</sup>

Rehabilitation Act  
of 1973 replaced  
the Vocational  
Rehabilitation Act

1990

JULY  
26<sup>TH</sup>

Americans with  
Disabilities Act  
(ADA) signed into  
law

1998

AUGUST  
7<sup>TH</sup>

Workforce  
Investment Act of  
1998

2008

SEPTEMBER  
25<sup>TH</sup>

Americans with  
Disabilities Act  
Amendments Act  
(ADAAA) signed  
into law

2013

SEPTEMBER  
24<sup>TH</sup>

OFCCP revised  
the regulations  
implementing  
Section 503

2023

SEPTEMBER  
26<sup>TH</sup>

OFCCP  
Celebrates the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
the Rehabilitation  
Act

