



1) Since the last election the prevalence of autism nationwide has increased from 1:500 to 1:166 according to figures released by the Centers for Disease Control in January of 2004. There is a significant probability that autism diagnoses will increase to 1:100 over the next four years during the tenure of the next President of the United States. With nearly 1% of the American population already being diagnosed autistic, would you establish a Presidential Task Force on Autism?

YES or NO, explain.

My Administration convened experts, parents, community members, researchers, and government officials at a National Autism Summit in Washington, D.C., in 2003. The Administration was represented by each of the Federal agencies that leads our autism efforts: the Department of Education, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration, the Administration on Children and Families, and others. Although many mysteries about this disease remain, especially with respect to causes and cures, there is much we can do today to help families living with this disease. Summit participants identified many important steps we can take to better integrate services, implement developmental screening, and advance biomedical research.

I have already substantially increased Federal funding for autism to begin to advance those steps. My 2005 budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) increases autism research funding to \$99 million, nearly double the 2001 level. This increase is being used to establish Centers of Excellence for Autism Research, support a national network on environmental health research, and establish public-private partnerships with advocacy groups to study autism risk. Also, the CDC is continuing to expand autism surveillance and epidemiology initiatives to monitor the extent of autism, and its efforts to educate Americans about the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. Under my budget, funding for these CDC activities has increased by 250 percent since 2001.

2) There is a hypothesis of a causal relationship between vaccines and neurological disorders, including developmental disorders, such as autism, particularly with



regard to the use of thimerosal, a mercury based preservative. Thimerosal is not a necessary component for vaccines because when vaccines are produced in single dose vials, they don't require thimerosal. Thimerosal is a known neurotoxin, reproductive an significant allergen that has been banned from over the counter and prescribed topical medications. Would you support a ban of the use of Thimerosal in both children and adult vaccines? YES or NO, explain.

I support the removal of Thimerosal from vaccines on the childhood national vaccine schedule. During a second term as President, I will continue to support increased funding to support a wide variety of research initiatives aimed at seeking definitive causes and/or triggers of autism. It is important to note that while there are many possible theories about causes or triggers of autism, no one material has been definitely included or excluded

- 3) The cost of raising a neurotypical child to the age of 18 is roughly \$1 million and \$1.3 million through college, at which point most children become productive adults able to care for themselves. A child with autism will have an average lifespan but will most likely require care and assistance far past the ages of 18 and 21 and will generally cost \$13 million over the course of their life for care. Would you support a tax credit for parents raising a child with a developmental disability, or more specifically, a child with autism? YES or NO, explain.

As President, I have fought very hard to implement fair and just tax policies to allow all American families an opportunity to keep more of their hard-earned money so they can put it to use in a way that best suits their families' needs. My comprehensive tax relief packages have doubled the child tax credit to \$1,000 per child, reduced the marriage penalty, and cut rates across the board, providing more than 43 million American families with relief that they can then spend on the needs of their children. During a second term in office, I will continue to look for ways to reduce the tax burden placed on America's working families – including those families raising children with disabilities who have significant



financial needs – so they can use their money for the therapies and treatments they deem most appropriate for their child.

- 4) Between 2000-2003, the states reportedly returned \$1.7 billion earmarked for special education. Yet, school systems continue to battle parents and fail to provide services again and again for these children claiming that they have no money for the programs. Would you support legislation that would require more accountability for the actual use of federal funds sent to the states that is allocated for special education to ensure that no child is left behind as a result of unspent education dollars? YES or NO, explain.

Throughout my first term as President, I have worked hard to ensure accountability in education. This is the philosophy of the landmark No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which passed both the House and Senate in significant bipartisan votes, and which ensures our schools and educators are accountable to the stakeholders, namely parents and students. During my first term, Federal funding for special education has increased by 75 percent and Federal funding for all elementary and secondary education programs has increased by 49 percent. Increased funding to ensure educators have the tools they need to do their job should be accompanied with higher standards and expectations. During a second term in office, I will continue to instruct the Department of Education to make sure Federal funds are spent on their designated purposes; and to ensure special education programs are both properly funded and meeting the needs of today's students.

- 5) There are currently 1.5 million people in the United States with autism. The vast majority of those are between the ages of 6 and 18 years of age. Ten years from now, they will all be adults. During your term in office would you work to develop initiatives to find meaningful and productive jobs through programs in the Department of Labor? Would you support the development of initiatives for



tax advantages for corporations who seek to provide meaningful jobs and support for individuals with autism? YES or NO, explain.

As part of a nationwide effort to build on the successes of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I announced the New Freedom Initiative in 2001 to help level the playing field for Americans with disabilities. Men and women with disabilities deserve equal employment opportunities and my Administration has created programs that help expand workforce options for employees with disabilities. Tax benefits are now serving as incentives for employers to provide computer equipment and Internet access so employees with qualifying disabilities can work from home. This flexibility will expand the universe of accessible employment and will allow employees to take advantage of this flexibility for teleworking.

My Administration is also ensuring the swift implementation of the "Ticket to Work" law, which provides incentives for people with disabilities to return to work. The law provides Americans with disabilities a voucher-like "ticket" that allows them to choose their own support services, including vocational education programs and rehabilitation services. It also extends Medicare coverage for some SSDI beneficiaries so employees can return to work without the fear of losing health benefits. To further encourage employees to return to work, the law also expands Medicaid eligibility categories so that individuals working with disabilities will receive benefits even after their income or condition improves.

I secured \$36.6 million in 2002 to fund State loan programs to help people with disabilities purchase assistive technologies, such as computers with special adaptive equipment. I have also mandated full implementation of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, requiring electronic and information technology purchased, maintained, and used by the Federal government to be readily accessible to people with disabilities.

In addition, the New Freedom Initiative will provide resources for technical assistance to help small businesses comply with the ADA so that they can better serve customers and hire more people with disabilities.

And the Department of Justice continues to aggressively enforce the ADA. Since 2001, the Civil Rights Division has resolved over 1,000 disability-related complaints, over 500 of those through mediation. Through its Project Civics Access initiative, the Civil Rights Division has worked with over 100 communities to bring them into compliance with the ADA. In so doing, many formal agreements have included making playgrounds accessible.



- 6) Parents of neurotypical children enjoy the opportunities of being able to save money for college educations through tax-deferred savings plans. Parents of children with autism, while their children may be able to go to college, generally do not have this option available to them, as it is unlikely that their children will attend a college. Would you support a plan that allowed a tax deferred savings plan for adult children with a diagnosis of autism, or other diagnosable and specified developmental delay, that would allow parents to save for their child's needs as an adult? YES or NO, explain.

I am very proud of my Administration's record of lowering taxes for all Americans. I have proposed two bold, new savings vehicles – Lifetime Savings Accounts and Retirement Savings Account – each of which would help parents save for their autistic child's needs as an adult. As parents of people with disabilities like autism well know, the continuum of care is often very expensive, especially during the adult years in which needs like housing, transportation, and living expenses must be paid for. Tax-deferred savings plans for education and medical care have enabled more American families to save their money to pay for significant expenditures, and I look forward to continuing to ease the tax burden for all Americans families, especially those that have members with disabilities.



7) There is currently a bill in Congress sponsored by Chris Smith, (R-NJ), HR 1700, that if passed would provide special allocated funds to train teachers to be able to specifically teach children with autism. The bill would provide funds to allow school systems to upgrade their curriculum for children with autism. Additionally, the bill would provide student loan relief for teachers who agreed to serve children with autism for a certain period of time. Do you support this legislation?

YES or NO, explain.

During a second term as President, I look forward to continuing to build on our record of continuing to improve education for all students, especially those with autism. Like the TEACH Act, I have proposed increased loan forgiveness – from \$5,000 to \$17,500 – for teachers of students with disabilities, including autism, and will continue to work with Congress to ensure that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is aligned with the principles of No Child Left Behind by ensuring accountability, more flexibility, more options for parents and an emphasis on doing what works to improve student achievement.