



On July 24, 2009, President Obama invited disability advocates to the White House to celebrate the 19th anniversary of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Chester Finn was there representing SABE, Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered. During the celebration President Obama announced that the United

States was signing the United Nations Treaty on Rights for People with Disabilities. “Disability rights aren't just civil rights to be enforced here at home; they're universal rights to be recognized and promoted around the world,” President Obama said. “And that's why I'm proud to announce that next week, the United States of America will join 140 other nations in signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities -- the first new human rights convention of the 21st century.”

Here are Chester’s comments about being with President Obama



It was fun talking to all the people outside the gate of the White House. We appreciated ADAPT being at the White House gate. They were advocating and working so hard to talk to people and handing out buttons that said Community Choice Act NOW!

But some people in the disability community took off their buttons when they got inside the White House. So if you advocate for people with disabilities why would you not show your support for Community Choice Act (CCA)? I had my button on and so did many others who are speaking up for CCA. We were showing the president and all the politically powerful people that people with disabilities and the elderly should not be left out of the healthcare reform.





Once inside the White House it was fun hanging out with Paul Marchand, director of the Disability Policy Collaboration, who gave me a tour of all the different rooms, the red room, the blue room and the dining room.

I spoke with Hillary Clinton and my Governor, David Paterson. These 2, plus President Obama, are political figures I look up to as far as making things happen.



I think by signing the treaty it means more freedom for people with disabilities. It will strengthen our advocating on guardianship issues. And also it will put a focus on getting people out of institutions. This new treaty will strengthen some older UN decisions against aversives and people with disabilities being sterilized against their will.



This should inspire us, give us more incentive to work harder in our advocacy. But without us making it work in the community, speaking out, then signing the treaty won't mean anything. It won't be getting done for people.

We have to stop thinking about just what it is we can get out of something instead consider what it means for the overall disability community.

Before SABLE was not included in events like this and now we are. It is because of our partnerships. Down the road we must work harder with some of the agencies like Health and Human Services. We have to report on the things that are happening in our lives. We need to set the example of how to work together and how to use respectful language.

Read what the President said at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-Proclamation-Signing/