



Disability History and Awareness Month 2023

Lex Frieden

Lex Frieden was born in Alva, Oklahoma, a rural community in northwestern Oklahoma. He graduated from Alva Senior High School in 1967 and began studying electrical engineering at Oklahoma State University. However, during his first year, he sustained a spinal cord injury in an automobile accident, causing him to become permanently disabled. Frieden is an Alumnus of the University of Tulsa, where he was named a Distinguished Alumnus of the University in 1979. In 2004, the Lex Frieden Presidential Scholarship was established by the University in his honor. He is also a graduate of the University of Houston. In 2004, the National University of Ireland, Galway, awarded him an honorary doctorate in law.



Frieden's career in public service began in the 1970s when he was made a member of the Congressional task force on science, technology, and disability. That panel's work led, in 1978, to the creation of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. Frieden was one of the central figures behind the enactment of the ADA.

As Executive Director of the National Council on Disability, Frieden led the effort to draft the ADA. Other notable legislation inspired by the council while Frieden was director included the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 and legislation to make national parks and recreation areas accessible to people with disabilities. After leaving NCD in 1988, Frieden was appointed to be the coordinator of the recently formed Congressional Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities.

President George W. Bush reappointed Frieden, Chairman of the NCD July 26, 2002, the anniversary of the signing of the ADA. Under Frieden's direction, among other notable projects, the Council produced a report, *Righting the ADA*, that made recommendations leading to the enactment of the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

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