

=It's your opinion=

Willowbrook order had a great impact

April 30 marks the 10-year anniversary of the most significant event in the history of services to mentally retarded and developmentally disabled persons. On that day in 1975, Gov. Hugh L. Carey, after only 120 days in office, signed a document that represented the single most dedicated commitment made by government to its disabled citizens. That document was the Willowbrook Consent Decree.

The decree's ramifications went beyond the impact on the 5,343 "class clients" directly affected by its terms. The decree has forever changed the way society — not just New York State — looks at the rights and entitlements of its disabled persons.

Simply stated, the decree has resulted in the commonly held belief that disabled persons should have every opportunity to live in the least-restrictive, most-rewarding environment possible.

The anniversary of the signing of the Willowbrook Consent Decree should be recognized for the independence that has been afforded to persons with mental retardation or developmental disabilities.

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