


Memorandum

Date: May 11, 1993

To: Senator Dole

From: Alec Vachon 

Re: ADAPT Demonstration Update

Attached is a clip from today's Washington Post regarding yesterday's demonstration by ADAPT in the Capitol.

Apparently, your offices are no longer a target -- ADAPT will stage a sit in at the American Health Care Association this morning, the trade group which represents 11,000 nursing homes nationwide, and leave Washington tomorrow.

In the end, cooler heads prevailed: at least some ADAPT members now acknowledge that "protesting to the converted" is not a particularly effective strategy.

Moreover, I met with ADAPT leaders on Sunday and spent a great deal of time since suggesting constructive alternatives. Although demonstrations may provide emotional satisfaction, ADAPT was advised that the hard work of developing sound legislative proposals would more likely advance their laudatory goal of increased community attendant care services (as an alternative to nursing homes and other forms of institutionalization).

cc: D. Stanley



BY BILL O'LEARY--THE WASHINGTON POST

Members of ADAPT exchange power salutes as Capitol Police arrest them during a protest outside a congressional office.

Disabled Protesters Disrupt Capitol

114 Arrested After Bailing Out of Wheelchairs, Blocking Halls

By Liz Spayd
Washington Post Staff Writer

More than 200 chanting protesters in wheelchairs swarmed into the U.S. Capitol yesterday, throwing themselves on the floor and blocking hallways to demand federal programs that would allow the disabled to live on their own.

Several of the demonstrators chained their wheelchairs together and spread sleeping bags across the tiled corridors, saying they were prepared to camp out until congressional leaders agreed to address their concerns.

Capitol Police closed off parts of the Capitol and, with the assistance of physicians and of translators for the hearing-impaired, arrested 114 protesters.

"Anyone's allowed in the building. But they were [lying] in the hallways and chanting," said Sgt. Dan R. Nichols. "They were asked to leave several times, and when they refused, we arrested them."

The group is in Washington for three days of demonstrations to urge changes in federal policies that would allow greater numbers of disabled people to live independently instead of in nursing homes. Specifically, the activists are asking that 25 percent of Medicaid funds spent on nursing homes be shifted to in-home care programs.

"We have no intention of stopping until we get what we want," said Terrance Turner, a Detroit resi-

ers. "If it's not today, then tomorrow. If not tomorrow, then the next day."

Shouting, "Down with nursing homes," and "Free our people," the demonstrators formed a human blockade around the double-doors leading into the office of House Majority Whip David E. Bonior (D-Mich.) for more than two hours.

Bonior's press secretary, John Schelble, said the congressman was at a doctor's appointment when the demonstrators made their surprise visit and didn't return until after they had left.

Bonior was targeted, in part, because of his leadership position in the House, but also because his office is on the first floor and therefore more accessible to the disabled.

Earlier in the day, the activists met with Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, who told them long-term care for the disabled is a key component of the Clinton administration's health care proposals.

"The secretary is very sensitive to their concerns," said Avis LaVelle, spokeswoman for Shalala's office. "Much of what they're asking for is being addressed by the health care task force."

Using civil disobedience to make their point, the organizers of yesterday's protest, members of a group called ADAPT, have been advocating rights for disabled peo-

ple. The protest was in Denver, when 19 activists illegally detained a public bus that was inaccessible to people in wheelchairs.

Since then, ADAPT—which stands for American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today—has become an increasingly militant group. It uses wheelchairs to barricade buildings, and members crawl across dirty streets to dramatize the helplessness of people in nursing homes.

One of ADAPT's favorite targets is the American Health Care Association, a Washington-based trade group that represents 11,000 nursing homes nationwide.

But making nursing homes the villain is unfair, association spokeswoman Claudia Askew said.

Nursing homes, she said, have been wrongly portrayed as malicious institutions that hold people against their will and deny them basic human freedoms.

"No one is forced to live in a nursing home," Askew said. "What ADAPT is advocating is taking funds away from nursing home residents. They're robbing Peter to pay Paul, and that's not the answer."

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