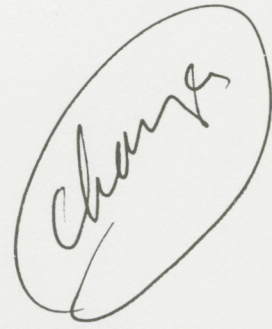


*Design for Dignity: Studies in Accessibility*



Foreword

Bill Lebovich has performed an important and timely service in preparing these richly illustrated case studies of diverse environments that promote and enhance the independence and integration of people with disabilities. He shows quite clearly that flexibility, creativity, and imagination are the essential tools for inclusion of people with disabilities in American society — and in fulfilling the promises of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Making accommodations is not new, however. In 1787, Benjamin Franklin, a Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention and, at 81, the oldest delegate, was virtually unable to walk because of gout and even slight movement could cause pain from a bladder stone.

So the City of Philadelphia arranged for four prisoners to carry Franklin between his home and the convention in a sedan chair. Suspended on two long, slightly flexible poles that damped any bouncing, it must have been an amazing sight as they moved along the streets and up the steps of the State House (later renamed Independence Hall) where the convention sessions were held.

And Franklin frequently wrote out his speeches, and had them read by another delegate, because standing was difficult and uncomfortable.

Franklin's disability was no bar to his contribution — deeply respected by his colleagues, of keen intelligence, calm temper, and good humor, he helped forge the

compromises that made agreement on the U.S. Constitution possible. Indeed, William Pierce of Georgia described Franklin as "possess[ing] an activity of mind equal to a youth of twenty-five years of age."

Like Franklin's chair, since ancient times people have used various "assistive devices" to remedy disability, or tried other means to restore lost abilities. But in the past 30 years another, complementary approach to disability and disability solutions has emerged — one that recognizes that disability is not solely a function of an individual's physical or mental impairment, but an interaction between a person's impairment and his or her environment.

Environments can disable — or enable. For example, for the person who uses a wheelchair, steps can prevent entering or moving about a building, but ramps, elevators, and lifts make it accessible. Or for a person with limited vision, a large print menu — a simple accommodation — can allow easy and unassisted selection of a meal.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which I was proud to support in the Congress, makes accessibility and accommodations national policy and federal law. Although prior legislation (going back as far as 1968) had a similar purpose, ADA provides a broader mandate and stronger and more certain enforcement.

ADA's stated purpose is "to establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability." To understand ADA, and the sometimes unfamiliar meaning of the word "discrimination" in the context of disability, it is essential to appreciate two principles at its heart.

First, fundamental convictions about human equality and the rights inherent in *all* individuals, including people with disabilities, and society's responsibility to protect those rights. As the Declaration of Independence proudly and forcefully proclaims: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

Second, that accessibility and accommodations are not simply matters of personal convenience for people with disabilities, but are essential if they are to be productive and active citizens. And to deny accessibility and accommodations is discrimination — and with ADA, unlawful.

Now, no one likes mandates, or to be told what to do. Yet I have been repeatedly impressed with the enthusiasm and good cheer of so many I have met — state and local officials, businessmen and women — to do what is needed to make ADA work. Why? I believe because they know that it is ~~the~~ right and important, and doing the right thing feels good. Also perhaps because disability is so personal — Republican or Democrat, rich or poor, of whatever ethnic background — it affects all of us and our families.

And, of course, any one of us, at any time, can be recruited into the ranks of the disabled — as I learned almost 50 years ago when shrapnel plowed into my right shoulder.

I encourage each reader to study these cases closely, and to note also another important, if unstated message: that "universal design".— the term used to describe

environments built to the needs of people with *and* without disabilities — not only enable the disabled, but improve the comfort, productivity, and safety of all persons.

Senator Bob Dole

May 1993  
Washington, D.C.