

Memorandum

Date: July 22, 1993

To: Senator Dole

From: Alec Vachon *AV*

Re: Remarks for NOD Drop-By

*Shirley*

You indicated interest in dropping by the National Organization on Disability's celebration of the 3rd Anniversary of ADA, to be held Monday in the Senate Park.

I have prepared short remarks for your approval (attached).

These remarks are intended to provide a unique historical perspective. Although totally forgotten, this summer is the 25th anniversary of the disability rights law that started it all -- the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. Incidentally, as I wrote you earlier, the individual mentioned -- Hugh Gallagher -- is the Dole Foundation nominee for the Betts Award and has deep Kansas roots. These remarks also mention your human rights bill, which has attracted strong positive interest.

I am also preparing for you a floor statement for the anniversary of ADA, which build on these remarks.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY, AND I THANK ALAN REICH AND THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU. I CONGRATULATE AGUAS BUENAS FOR ITS WORK IN MAKING ITS COMMUNITY ACCESSIBLE.

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE 3RD ANNIVERSARY OF ADA. IT IS PROPER WE COMMEMORATE ADA, BUT TODAY SHOULD ALSO MARK ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY, ONE TOO LITTLE NOTED -- THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEGISLATION THAT STARTED IT ALL. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, ON AUGUST 12, 1968, THE ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT, BECAME LAW.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BARRIERS ACT WAS SIMPLE -- TO REQUIRE BUILDINGS FINANCED WITH FEDERAL FUNDS BE ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. ONLY A PAGE LONG AND WITH NO ENFORCEMENT PROVISION, THE BARRIERS ACT WAS OUR FIRST INCLUSION LAW.

FROM THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK, LOOKING DOWN CONSTITUTION AVENUE, WE CAN ALMOST SEE THE PLACE THAT PROMPTED THIS LAW. IN THE EARLY 1960'S, A YOUNG SENATE AIDE, HUGH GALLAGHER, A WHEELCHAIR USER, WANTED TO VISIT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART. BUT TO ENTER UNASSISTED HE NEEDED A RAMP AT THE CONSTITUTION AVENUE ENTRANCE.

GALLAGHER WROTE TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY ASKING FOR A RAMP, AND WAS TOLD THAT ONE WOULD DESTROY THE ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING. HE HAD THE AUDACITY TO BELIEVE THAT THE GALLERY, AS A NATIONAL MUSEUM, BELONGED TO ALL AMERICANS, NOT JUST THOSE WHO COULD WALK INTO IT.

DESPITE THIS REFUSAL, GALLAGHER GOT HIS WISH. HIS BOSS, SENATOR BOB BARTLETT OF ALASKA, PREVAILED ON THE MUSEUM'S TRUSTEES TO INSTALL A RAMP IN 1965. THAT RAMP -- MADE OF WOOD AND INTENDED TO BE ONLY TEMPORARY -- IS STILL THERE TODAY AND WORKS FINE.

BUT TO SOLVE THIS ACCESS PROBLEM IN A MORE COMPLETE WAY, GALLAGHER DRAFTED THE ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT.

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN 25 YEARS, AND MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE -- MAKING ADA WORK, HEALTH CARE REFORM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, AND MANY OTHER THINGS.

BUT THE CHALLENGES ARE NOT ONLY IN THIS NATION, BUT ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD WHERE VIOLATIONS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE FAR TOO COMMON. I AM PLEASED TO REPORT TO YOU TODAY THAT ON JULY 16TH I INTRODUCED A BILL TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO EXAMINE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WORLDWIDE. THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAD BEEN AMERICA'S GREATEST EXPORT, AND IT IS PAST TIME WE INCLUDED DISABILITY RIGHTS IN OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. THIS BILL WILL DO THAT, AND SEND A MESSAGE AROUND THAT WORLD THAT AMERICA RESPECTS THE RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLE, INCLUDING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES.

THANK YOU AGAIN.