

SENATOR BOB DOLE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL DISABILITY WORKING GROUP
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IT'S A REAL PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU HERE TODAY
AND TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS LONGSTANDING AND
IMPORTANT WORKING GROUP. YOU HAVE PIONEERED
CREATIVE PROGRAMMING AND POLITICAL ADVOCACY FOR
DISABLED AMERICANS ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT.

ONLY IN THE PAST 20 YEARS HAVE WE TRULY BEGUN TO
BREAK DOWN AGE OLD BARRIERS, WHICH DENIED TO
DISABLED AMERICANS THE OPPORTUNITIES GUARANTEED IN
OUR TRADITIONS AND LAWS TO ALL AMERICANS. AND WE'VE
COME THIS FAR BECAUSE OF AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP AT
THE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS -- AN EXPANDED
PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE
SECTOR WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY ESSENTIAL AS WE
WORK TO ENACT THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND
OTHER FEDERAL INITIATIVES.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

I AM VERY PLEASED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH HAS CALLED FOR A NEW EMPHASIS ON PROGRAMS SERVING THE DISABLED, ESPECIALLY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS, EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES AND STRONGER CIVIL RIGHTS STATUTES.

ON THIS AND SO MANY OTHER ISSUES, CONGRESS PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE. HOWEVER, THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ON BOTH OUR SHOULDERS. WE ENACT THE LAWS YOU IMPLEMENT THEM.

THEREFORE, YOU CAN BE SURE THIS IS ONE AREA WHERE
I PLEDGE MY SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT TO BRIDGING A
STRONGER COLLABORATION.

LET'S FACE IT -- TOUGH CHOICES MUST BE MADE IF WE
ARE TO ENSURE THAT EXISTING PROGRAMS ARE EFFICIENTLY
ADMINISTERED, AND EFFECTIVELY COORDINATED -- THAT IS
WHEN OUR RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE MET.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

THIS WILL TAKE PRIORITIZING. IN MY VIEW, THE MAJOR DISABILITY THEMES OF THIS CONGRESS OUGHT TO BE ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND INTEGRATION -- ALL FACTORS IN THE SUCCESS OF ANY INDIVIDUAL.

EMPLOYMENT

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IS ONE OF OUR HIGHEST PRIORITIES. WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE RECENT HARRIS SURVEY WHICH SHOWS WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.

THE DISABLED WANT TO WORK; CAN WORK. THEY DESERVE THE CHANCE TO WORK. IT'S PART OF WHAT WE ALL CALL BEING AN AMERICAN. AND, AS I SAID, IF WE CAN ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO FULL EMPLOYMENT -- IT'S NOT ONLY THE DISABLED, BUT THIS WHOLE COUNTRY WHICH WILL BENEFIT. CONGRESS SHOULD FOCUS ON CREATING INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF THE DISABLED, AND -- EQUALLY IMPORTANT -- ELIMINATING THE DISINCENTIVES THAT CURRENTLY EXIST.

WE ALSO NEED TO CONSIDER HOW TO PROVIDE TO THOSE WITH DISABILITIES THE AFFORDABLE MEDICAL INSURANCE THAT IS ESSENTIAL TO ALL WORKERS. I HAVE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION WHICH WILL ASSURE THAT THIS NEED IS MET. THE "SOCIAL SECURITY WORK INCENTIVES ACT" WILL ALLOW INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE (SSDI) AND WHO EARN ABOVE THE SUBSTANTIAL GAINFUL ACTIVITY (SGA) TO CONTINUE TO WORK AND RECEIVE THEIR BENEFITS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

COMMUNITY VS. INSTITUTIONAL CARE

AND WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHOSE DISABILITIES ARE SO SEVERE THAT THEY CANNOT WORK? WE CAN BE NO LESS ATTENTIVE TO THEIR PROBLEMS.

TODAY WE ARE SPENDING \$5.2 BILLION FOR MEDICAID'S ANTIQUATED, INEFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED -- THE LARGEST SINGLE FEDERAL PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED. A BIG CHUNK OF THAT MONEY GOES TO THE "INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED" -- THE ICF/MR PROGRAM.

PEOPLE WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES DESERVE FULL
ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES -- FOR THOSE WHO REALLY DO
NOT NEED FULL-TIME INSTITUTIONAL CARE -- THE GREAT
MAJORITY -- COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES ARE BY FAR THE
BEST SOLUTION; THE SOLUTION WHICH PROVIDES
MEANINGFUL WORK OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE CHANCE TO
ENJOY THE SAME KIND OF DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES ENJOYED
BY THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.

MY REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUE, JOHN CHAFEE, HAS CRAFTED AN EXCELLENT PIECE OF LEGISLATION, TO DEVELOP QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORT TO STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT OF THE MEDICAID PROGRAM. IT IS PART OF AN EFFORT THAT A NUMBER OF US IN CONGRESS ARE SPEARHEADING, TO PROVIDE REAL CHOICE -- CHOICE AMONG VARIOUS AVAILABLE SERVICES, AND CHOICE AMONG A VARIETY OF LIVING SITUATIONS.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

EMPLOYMENT, MEDICAL COVERAGE, INSTITUTIONAL AND
COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES -- THOSE ARE SOME OF THE
SPECIFIC CHALLENGES. BUT THERE IS ALSO ONE OVERRIDING
PROBLEM WHICH MUST ALWAYS REMAIN ON THE TOP OF OUR
AGENDA, UNTIL IT IS FINALLY RESOLVED -- DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST THE DISABLED.

NEARLY 16 YEARS AGO, THE CONGRESS TOOK AN
IMPORTANT, INITIAL STEP IN ADDRESSING THIS PROBLEM, BY
ENACTING TITLE V OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973
WHICH YOU ALL ARE SO FAMILIAR WITH. RECENT SUPREME
COURT CASES AND THE ENACTMENT OF SEVERAL IMPORTANT
PIECES OF CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION SUCH AS THE CIVIL
RIGHTS RESTORATION ACT AND THE FAIR HOUSING
AMENDMENTS OF 1988 HAVE STRENGTHENED THE LEGAL
BASE OF OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION.

THE ADA REPRESENTS THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT
LEGISLATIVE ACTION WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT
DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY. IT IS THE BEST
INTEREST OF ALL AMERICANS TO DECREASE THE COSTS OF
DEPENDENCY AND TO INCREASE THE PRODUCTIVE
CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR NATION OF AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES. I AM ENCOURAGED THAT CONGRESS WILL PASS
THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION GIVEN THE SUPPORT OF
PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE CONTINUED WORK THE HOUSE IS
DOING TO FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE
DISABILITY, BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMUNITIES.

IN PARTICULAR, I WANT TO INSURE THAT AS WE REMOVE THE BARRIERS NOW FACING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES -- AS WE MUST -- WE DO NOT PLACE AN UNFAIR AND UNREASONABLE BURDEN ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHICH MUST ACCOMMODATE TO THE MANDATES OF THIS WORTHWHILE LEGISLATION. I WANT THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO JOIN IN ENTHUSIASTICALLY -- BECAUSE THEY SEE THE BENEFITS THEY WILL DERIVE FROM BEING ABLE TO UTILIZE THE RESOURCE REPRESENTED BY THE DISABLED;

WE SHOULD PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND
ADVICE TO THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR WHICH
WILL FEEL THE IMPACT OF THE LAW -- TO ASSIST THEM WITH
THE CHANGES THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE, AND TO SEE
THE WISDOM AND DESIRABILITY OF DOING SO. IN THE LONG
RUN, THAT WILL NOT ONLY BE FAIR TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR,
BUT BE BEST FOR THOSE THIS LEGISLATION IS INTENDED TO
HELP. ADDITIONALLY, WE IN CONGRESS ARE LOOKING AT
WAYS TO ENHANCE TAX INCENTIVES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES
AND THE TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY IN MEETING THEIR
OBLIGATIONS UNDER THIS ACT.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS CLEAR: DISCRIMINATION COSTS THE
DISABLED DEARLY; COSTS THE PRIVATE SECTOR DEARLY;
AND COSTS THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER DEARLY. ALL
TAXPAYERS ARE UNDERWRITING THE WASTE THAT RESULTS
FROM OUR WIDESPREAD DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE
DISABLED. THIS TERRIBLE COST -- IN ECONOMIC AND HUMAN
TERMS -- IS FAR GREATER THAN WILL BE THE COST OF
ELIMINATING SUCH DISCRIMINATION.

COLLABORATION

SO THE CHALLENGES OUT THERE ARE REAL. THE PRESIDENT HAS PROVIDED LEADERSHIP. THOSE OF US ON CAPITOL HILL ARE FOLLOWING THAT LEAD AND WILL LOOK TO YOU FOR GUIDANCE AND EXPERTISE AS WE RESTRUCTURE OUR FEDERAL PROGRAMS. GOVERNMENT CAN PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN PROMOTING THE INTERESTS OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES, BUT CLEARLY WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IS A COMMITMENT TO A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR COOPERATIVE EFFORT.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE 1990'S WILL PROVIDE A NEW
DIRECTION TO ADDRESS AND RESOLVE THE NEEDS OF
MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY DISABLED AMERICANS SO THAT
AN INCLUSIVE AMERICA BECOMES A REALITY -- NOT A DREAM.