

REMARKS OF SENATOR ROBERT J. DOLE
TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CHAPTER LEGISLATIVE/ADVOCACY
DIRECTORS OF THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
FEBRUARY 25, 1991
SENATE DIRKSEN AUDITORIUM (ROOM SDG 50)

With a stroke of the pen on July 26, 1990, President George Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), outlawing discrimination against people with disabilities and ensuring that the disabled will have the opportunity to live lives of dignity and independence.

This law is intended to prevent discrimination in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. Most importantly, skilled qualified individuals, regardless of a disability, will become productive, contributing members of society. Tax-users will become tax-payers, and all Americans will benefit through the ability of an all inclusive work force and a stronger American economy. People with disabilities will become more active consumers, purchasing the goods and services that they desire and need.

The ADA is an important beginning, giving us not only a framework from which to work, but also a mandate from which to proceed. However, to reinforce the goals of the ADA and to move disability policy forward into the next century, it is critical to maintain a united and solid partnership between the disability communities as well as the public and private sectors. Working together, we can ensure that every American citizen will be provided the access and opportunity to be a part of all that society offers.

More importantly, by increasing public awareness through education, we can break down the attitudinal barriers that prevent full participation in the American mainstream.

Like everyone involved with the ADA, I feel privileged to have played a role in its passage. However, passage does not guarantee that our job is complete. As we look ahead to the next century, I hope that there will be little need for government intervention to assure the rights of any segment of American society. But, if it is still necessary to address discrimination, all of us in the disability community can continue to make a difference by working together.

As Board of Directors and Chapter Legislative Advocates, you have the ability to disseminate information and empower your peers. As I see it, our work is far from done and there is an important role for educated constituents to play. Specifically, Congress needs your input in order to formulate legislation responsive to your needs as consumers and the concerns of commerce and industry as suppliers.

LOBBY NO / EDUCATE YES!

As lobbyists and concerned citizens, you shape the legislative agenda and the policy making process. Nowhere was this more evident than the grass roots movement that led to Congressional consideration of the ADA. Congress listened to the voices of people with disabilities and we will continue to do so as long as you are outspoken. Contact your Representatives. Ccontact your Senators. Let them know about the issues that are important to your membership.

The 102nd Congress has a busy agenda. One of our top issues is technical assistance in order to ensure effective implementation and compliance with ADA's regulations. While Congress has the power to appropriate funds for this massive undertaking, you must also participate in the dissemination of technical assistance information. Furthermore, as productive citizens of this great country, you can and should play a critical role in breaking down antiquated attitudinal barriers about people with disabilities. Not only do you have to lobby Congress, but you must also lobby the American people.

Another item that must seriously be addressed this session includes a comprehensive personal assistance consumer bill. Although we have ADA, if we don't have an adequate personal assistance program based on a consumer model we can't attempt to fulfill the ADA's goals. The ability to live independently and with dignity depends greatly on one's autonomy. Effective personal assistance is a step in the right direction.

You can have direct influence on the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act as well as numerous other bills that address military personnel participating in the Persian Gulf. These are only a few of the issues that you and your PVA Chapter can become involved in and affect.

- Reauthorization
Rehab

Fred
Lee
Maureen
Jerry } well rep

- Finance

Work Disincentives SSI/SSDI

- REGS - ATTICB
JUSTICE III
EEOC
FCC

Consumer Based

- Health Care Reform / PA Program