

SENATOR BOB DOLE

VIDEO REMARKS

REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION

APRIL 8, 1991

I AM VERY SORRY THAT I AM UNABLE TO PERSONALLY ATTEND YOUR SYMPOSIUM ON THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND ITS IMPACT ON TECHNOLOGY.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INSPIRED BY THE STATE MOTTO OF KANSAS-- "TO THE STARS THROUGH DIFFICULTIES." WELL, THE REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION HAS DEVOTED ITSELF TO ENSURING THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REACH FOR THE STARS...TO DEVELOP TO THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL...AND TO ENTER THE MAINSTREAM OF SOCIETY.

ON JULY 26, 1990, PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH SIGNED THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, OUTLAWING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND ENSURING THAT ALL AMERICANS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE LIVES OF DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

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.

YOUR SYMPOSIUM IS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL TO IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BECAUSE

OF ITS FOCUS ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SHARING.

RTA CAN ASSIST INDIVIDUALS IN ACHIEVING OPTIMAL EFFECTIVENESS IN THE WORK PLACE AND AID INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESSES IN SUCCESSFULLY SERVING AND EMPLOYING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH COST-EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF STATE OF THE ART ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY.

ACCORDING TO A LABOR DEPARTMENT STUDY, WORKFORCE 2000, THE UNITED STATES WILL SOON EXPERIENCE A SEVERE LABOR SHORTAGE. REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY CAN AND SHOULD BE UTILIZED TO ADDRESS THIS EMPLOYEE SHORTFALL.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REINFORCE THE GOALS OF ADA BY MOVING DISABILITY POLICY FORWARD INTO THE NEXT CENTURY. THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY MAINTAINING A UNITED AND SOLID PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE DISABILITY COMMUNITIES AS WELL AS THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

AS REHABILITATION SPECIALISTS INTERESTED IN THE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITY TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF ADA THROUGH EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

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that there are still many misconceptions to be corrected. A more vigorous partnership must be forged between the rehabilitation and business communities in order to accomplish this feat.

PWI programs such as Kansas Elks Training Center for the Handicapped (KETCH) and Menniger Foundation's Return to Work Center are in a unique position to assist in the implementation of the ADA. PWI programs are needed to engage the talent and leadership of private industry as partners in the rehabilitation process. Together, both groups can more effectively identify job opportunities, as well as the necessary skills to qualify people with disabilities for the jobs of today and challenges of the future.

My commitment to employment of people with disabilities inspired me to create the Dole Foundation. Our organization enables the private sector to provide financial assistance to the many outstanding community employment and training programs which foster opportunities for people with disabilities to be competitively employed. KETCH and Menniger's PWI Programs are two of the excellent programs our foundation has assisted.

I hope that Congress will be able to rely on you, and other PWI experts, to educate both the disability and business communities. As PWI specialists, you straddle both worlds, both communities. You have the knowledge, skills, and ability to ensure compliance and enforcement of ADA through education and technical assistance.

Success depends in part on your advocacy. We need to display the same tenacious commitment to implementation and enforcement as was evident during Congressional consideration and final passage of ADA.

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