

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROBERT DOLE ON PASSAGE OF S.J. RES. 184

Mr. President: I am pleased that S. J. Resolution 184 designating November, 1991 as "National Accessible Housing Month" is today ready for passage. On July 26, 1990, President Bush signed landmark legislation guaranteeing the inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. This law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is intended to prevent discrimination in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. Just a year prior to ADA, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act Amendments, prohibiting discrimination in housing against people with disabilities.

Congress has recognized the rights of 43 million disabled Americans. Seventy percent of all Americans will, at some time in their lives, have a temporary or permanent disability. Currently, 32 million Americans are over the age of 65 and many have or will develop vision, hearing or physical disabilities as part of the natural aging process. Whether a result of an accident, or as part of growing older, accessible or easily adaptable housing is a major concern for millions of Americans.

As we attempt to integrate Americans with disabilities into our towns and communities, it is essential that we realize the obstacles our disabled friends and family members face. Stairs, narrow doorways, and lack of maneuvering room can render a home completely unaccessible. The public needs to become more cognizant of the ways in which individuals can foster integration of the disabled.

Both private and public sectors play an important role in promoting greater integration of people with disabilities through an accessible society. Initiatives begun by the private sector have increased public awareness of the need for accessible housing. This is exemplified through the national public education campaign conducted by National Easter Seals Society and Century 21 Real Estate Corporation. This program, entitled "Easy Access Housing for Easier Living," identifies key structural features that allow for reasonable entry and circulation without extensive modification.

By designating the month of November 1991 as "National Accessible Housing Month" greater public awareness activities can proliferate and the barriers preventing people with disabilities from living more inclusive lives in their communities will become a reality.