

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 10, 1994
To: Senator Dole
From: Alec Vachon *AV*
Re: S.4 Amendment: Commerce Dept. Study of Standards for
Computer/Telecommunications Accessibility for People
w/Disabilities

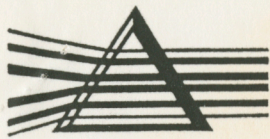
Background to the amendment provided you on S.4 (copy attached):

- * Purpose: This amendment would direct Secretary of Commerce to review current federal government and private efforts to set standards for computers and other electronic devices for their usability by people with such disabilities as blindness, deafness, or trouble using their hands.
- * Rationale: This study is important for at least 2 reasons. First, if people with disabilities are to participate in the jobs of the future (and the jobs of today) and the so-called "Information Superhighway," they must be able to use equipment such as computers and other electronic devices. Second, although quite a bit of activity is going on in this area, but there is no thorough survey or analysis of the state of the art.
- * Memo from Paul Hearne. Paul Hearne has also written you a memo on this subject, which you forwarded to me (copy attached).
- * Eventual Outcome: Two things: (1) stimulate development of voluntary standards or seal of approval as a "disability friendly" computer or electronic device. For example, a electrical device such as a lamp or air conditioner marked with a tag "UL Approved" means the device meets the safety standards of the privately operated Underwriter's Lab; and (2) provide ideas for new initiatives for you on disability telecommunications/technology issues.
- * Other options: If you decide not to sponsor this amendment, I can look for other opportunities to achieve the same end.

DO YOU WANT TO SPONSOR THIS AMENDMENT?

YES _____ NO _____

Not now



THE DOLE FOUNDATION

FOR EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 9, 1994
TO: Senator Dole
FROM: Paul Hearne
SUBJECT: S-1086

Last week I chaired my quarterly AT&T Advisory Panel meeting for people with disabilities. In our discussion concerning accessibility to the national information infrastructure, we discussed a bill proposed by Senators Inouye and Danforth -- S1086.

This bill discusses accessibility to the information highway. The language refers to "universal access," which is a term of art meaning both financial and electronic accessibility. However, unlike the House bills, it does not define accessibility in the ADA context of "Accessible to and usable by people with disabilities."

Senator, I felt I should call it to your attention because when this information infrastructure is in place, people with disabilities must be included through accessibility to both the hardware and the software so that they can attain employment and continue to have access to the information that they need for a competitive edge. If there is not language in the law from the start, we know that the argument will then be that it costs too much to include after the fact.

I will assist in any effort in this regard.

Statement of Purpose: To direct the Secretary of Commerce to prepare a study of standard setting of accessibility of information technologies by people with disabilities.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MR. DOLE, for himself, and Mr. -----
submitted the following amendment:

Viz: At the appropriate place, add the following:

The Secretary of Commerce is directed to prepare and issue a report in six months to the President and Congress (1) on the status of current Federal government and private efforts to set standards of the accessibility to persons with physical, sensory, and cognitive deficits for software, computers, and other information technologies; and for the design and operation of such devices intended to access the National Information Infrastructure; and (2) making recommendations regarding the feasibility of a federal or private entity providing independent testing and evaluation of the accessibility of software, computers, other information technologies, and devices to access the National Information Infrastructure, and such other recommendations on accessibility by people with disabilities to computer products and telecommunications as the Secretary considers appropriate.