

MEMORANDUM TO SENATOR DOLE

DA: June 17, 1995  
FR: Alec Vachon  
RE: DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE APPOINTS DISABILITY ADVISORY GROUP; ARE DISABILITY POLITICS GOING (MORE) PARTISAN?

*Good*  
*Fowler*

PER ATTACHED PRESS RELEASE, DNC Chairman Don Fowler announced a Disability Advisory Council on May 18. As I have written you, the DNC takes this constituency seriously--a full-time staffer does outreach. On May 11, I attended the National Council on Independent Living's annual Washington dinner. Fowler was working the crowd, and Henry Cisneros was the keynote speaker (accepting a NCIL award to Clinton). Cisneros's message: "Democratic block grants good; Republican block grants bad."

**\*\*WE SHOULD EXPECT DISABILITY POLITICS TO BECOME MORE OPENLY PARTISAN, DESPITE THE TRADITION OF NONPARTISANSHIP IN THE SENATE.**

CLINTON'S DISABILITY CAMPAIGN STRATEGY '92--AND '96??. The DNC press release claims 10% of voters are disabled. Although Bush was competitive with disabled voters in '88 (1-3% of victory margin), in '92 Clinton got 50% of this vote (Bush, 26%; Perot, 18%). Clinton ran an accessible campaign by assuring:

1. architectural access to campaign offices and events;
2. sign language interpreters at campaign events;
3. TDDs in offices and captioning of most campaign ads;
4. accessible campaign literature--large print, braille, audiotape, and computer disk;
5. conference calls for outreach on political strategy;
6. direct mail appeals to thousands of disabled voters;
7. involvement in national, state, and local campaign offices and events;
8. people with "visible" disabilities at campaign events--e.g., two people with visible disabilities were on stage immediately following Clinton's acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention; and
9. press conferences by people w/disabilities in major media markets endorsing the Clinton/Gore ticket.

DISABLED VOTERS AND YOUR CAMPAIGN. I believe the campaign is recruiting a volunteer coordinator (Judy Brotman)--it's needed. I handled accessibility at your Topeka announcement (volunteer time)--when I arrived, people in wheelchairs were to be located at the back of both sites. The campaign staff seemed uncertain what to do, but was very cooperative when I proposed moving this section to front and left side. Also, I am getting calls from people who want to volunteer--which are referred to the campaign.

RNC AND DISABLED VOTER. As you know, John Hager strove mightily last year to get the RNC interested in outreach. These efforts have had no visible results.

U.S. Newswire  
May 19, 1995

**HEADLINE: DNC NATIONAL CHAIRMAN DON FOWLER ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF DNC  
DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

CONTACT: Patrick Dorton of the Democratic National Committee, 202-488-5069  
DATELINE: WASHINGTON, May 18

**BODY:**

Democratic National Committee, Chairman Don Fowler today announced the formation of the DNC Disability Advisory Council. The panel, comprised of leaders from the disability community, is charged with advising and assisting the DNC in maximizing the participation and involvement of people with disabilities in Democratic Party activities.

"The Democratic National Committee is engaged in an aggressive effort to bring people with disabilities into the Democratic Party," said DNC Chairman Fowler. "Our goal with the Disability Council is to activate Democrats in the disability community, and convince those people in the community that are undecided that the Democratic Party deserves their support."

Currently, 49 million non-institutionalized Americans have a disability--nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population. But fewer than 3 in 10 adults with disabilities have ever participated in political activities with the goal of advocating on behalf of the disability community.

"People with disabilities are a tremendous untapped resource in American politics," said Fowler. "The President and the Democratic Party have a outstanding record of fighting on behalf of the disability community. It is no accident that this administration has appointed more people with disabilities to positions of responsibility than any prior administration. Our challenge at the Democratic National Committee is to communicate this record to every single voter in the disability community."

In the 1992 election, among people with disabilities who voted, 50 percent chose Bill Clinton, 26 percent chose George Bush, and 18 percent chose Ross Perot. These voters comprised approximately 10 percent of all voters in the 1992 Presidential race.

"Democrats now have an opportunity," said Fowler. "Republicans have helped to draw a very clear contrast during this Congress. They have threatened to gut the Americans with Disabilities Act. They have proposed doing away with scores of federal initiatives that have provided opportunities for people with disabilities. Our job now is to attract these people to the Democratic Party. The creation of the DNC Disability Advisory Council is an important step in this effort."

The DNC Disability Advisory Council is chaired by Fred Fay from Massachusetts and co-chaired by Edward Smith from North Carolina and Mary McKnew from Washington state (See attached biographies).

## DNC DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

### FRED FAY, MASSACHUSETTS, (CHAIR)

Fred Fay is one of the best known disability leaders in the country. He is chairman of the Massachusetts Democrats with Disabilities and co-chairman of Justice for All, the disability community's organized effort to combat the cuts and program reductions proposed in the Contract with America. He was very active in support for President Clinton in the 1992 campaign and Sen. Kennedy's 1994 reelection campaign.

In addition, he played a key role in the disability community's campaign to support the President's health care reform proposal. He helped to organize the disability community in Massachusetts for Democrats. He brings to this position an intimate knowledge of the disability community in the northeast and throughout the country. His accomplishments are all the more remarkable in view of the fact that all of this work is accomplished through his use of the telephone and a very sophisticated computer set-up in his home because his disability largely confines him to his home and prevents him from standing or even sitting up in a chair.

### EDWARD SMITH, NORTH CAROLINA (CO-CHAIR)

Ed Smith is chairman of the North Carolina Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities and director of the Civil Rights Division of the North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings. He is recognized as a key leader in both the African American and disability communities. He has a long history of participation in numerous state and federal political races in North Carolina and was a key coordinator for the Clinton/Gore '92 Campaign. Ed was recently appointed to the Board of the Federal Home Loan Bank in Atlanta.

### MARY MCKNEW, WASHINGTON STATE (CO-CHAIR)

Mary is an at-Large member of the <Democratic> National Committee from Washington state and is the only member of the DNC from the disability community. She is an assistant to Washington Gov. Lowrey and was very active in supporting the Clinton/Gore campaign.

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:

- Bobby Simpson, Arkansas
- Hugh Hollenberg, California
- Michela Alioto, California
- Curtis Richards, California
- Jim Parrish, Florida
- Robert Kilbury, Illinois
- Max Starkloff, Missouri
- Anne Thomas, New Mexico
- Joan Kinzer, New York
- Becky Ogle, Tennessee
- Bob Kafka, Texas
- Ben Soukup, South Dakota
- Paul Schroeder, Chicago
- Judy Chamberlin, Massachusetts
- Nancy Ward, Nebraska