

United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

TO: SENATOR DOLE
FROM: DARREN AND CHRISTINA
RE: SPEECH, NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE
BLIND

Attached are a series of talking points for
your speech tonight to the National Federation
of the Blind.

TALKING POINTS
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

- o I BELIEVE WE ARE MEETING AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME. FOR THIS, THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS, IS INTENDED TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE NEEDS OF THE BLIND AND OTHERS WHO MAKE UP OUR NATION'S 35 MILLION HANDICAPPED CITIZENS.
- o WE ARE ALSO MEETING IN THE AFTERMATH OF PERHAPS THE FINEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE DISABLED: THE CLIMB BY 11 HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS, SEVEN OF WHOM WERE BLIND, TO THE SUMMIT OF MT. RAINIER IN WASHINGTON.
- o JUST YESTERDAY, THESE 11 CLIMBERS WERE JUSTLY HONORED IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL. AFTER A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN, THEY WERE ABLE TO WITNESS THE PASSAGE -- BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT -- OF A SENATE RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THEIR COURAGE AND DETERMINATION IN CONQUERING THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES.
- o BUT THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE RECOGNIZED FOR MORE THAN THE CLIMB ITSELF. THEY WERE HONORED FOR PROVING -- IN SPECTACULAR FASHION -- THAT BLIND AND OTHER HANDICAPPED PERSONS ARE DISABLED ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY ARE PREVENTED FROM ACHIEVEMENT BY PHYSICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS.
- o CERTAINLY WE, AS A NATION, HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS IN OPENING THE DOORS TO SUCH PROGRESS. THE LAST DECADE HAS SEEN THE REMOVAL OF NUMEROUS ARCHITECTURAL AND TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY PUT THE NATION'S 500,000 BLIND CITIZENS AT A SEVERE DISADVANTAGE.

TALKING POINTS

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- o THE CONGRESS HAS SUPPLEMENTED THOSE EFFORTS BY PROVIDING TAX BREAKS FOR THE REMOVAL OF SUCH BARRIERS, AND BY SUPPLYING TAX INCENTIVES FOR THE HIRING OF BLIND AND OTHER HANDICAPPED CITIZENS.
- o I HAVE BEEN PLEASED WITH MANY SUCH EFFORTS BECAUSE, RATHER THAN PROVIDE WELFARE SERVICES TO THE BLIND, THEY HAVE PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.
- o HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE THAT WE CANNOT REST AT THIS POINT AND COMMEND OURSELVES ON PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS. FOR, ALTHOUGH THE PUBLIC HAS BECOME MORE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE BLIND AND TO LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO PROTECT THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS, THERE IS STILL MUCH TO BE DONE.
- o AS KENNETH JERNIGAN, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND, STATED AT THE CAPITOL YESTERDAY: 1981 HAS BROUGHT A TIME OF NEWNESS AND HOPE TO THE UNITED STATES.
- o AND, AS MR. JERNIGAN ADDED, THE BLIND AND OTHER HANDICAPPED AMERICANS NEED NOT FEAR THE CHANGES THAT MAY COME WITH THAT RENEWED HOPE.
- o AS YOU ALL KNOW, OF COURSE, THIS IS A TIME OF BUDGET TRIMMING IN WASHINGTON. BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE FOR A SINGLE MOMENT THAT THIS NATION INTENDS TO SUBSTITUTE FISCAL AUSTERITY FOR SUPPORT FOR THE HANDICAPPED. NOR DO I BELIEVE THAT OUR COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE BLIND WILL BE REDUCED.

- o THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED WROTE OF OUR CITIZENS -- HANDICAPPED AND NON-HANDICAPPED ALIKE -- "...WE LOVE THE SAME COUNTRY, WE CARE ABOUT THE SAME THINGS, WE DREAM THE SAME DREAMS."
- o YESTERDAY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS WILL HELP ACHIEVE THOSE DREAMS.
- o LET ME SAY THAT I SHARE MR. JERNIGAN'S CONFIDENCE THAT SUCH EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE BOTH TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY -- AND TO FULFILL THE RIGHT -- OF THE NATION'S BLIND CITIZENS TO LIVE AND WORK AS EQUALS, WHILE HELPING ASSURE THAT ATTENTION GIVEN TO THE NEEDS OF THE BLIND IS FOCUSED, NOT ON THEIR DISABILITIES, BUT ON THEIR CAPABILITIES INSTEAD.