

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE ON THE AMERICANS
WITH DISABILITIES ACT

8/14/90

I have supported the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) from the beginning, because I believe that this legislation is necessary to bring 43 million disabled Americans into the mainstream of American life. No doubt about it, this is landmark legislation. We need this legislation not only because it is just and fair for people with disabilities, but because all of us can benefit from the talents and abilities of all Americans. It will bring quality to the lives of millions of Americans who have not had quality in the past. The message to America by passing this bill is that inequality and prejudice will no longer be tolerated. ADA's message to people with disabilities is that your time has come with empowerment to exercise your rights to participate in the mainstream of America.

In 1964, Congress declared discrimination illegal and laid a solid civil rights foundation for our Nation. We are building upon that foundation with the ADA bill, providing civil rights protection for millions of Americans with disabilities. I am proud that we have reached this juncture in history and I look forward to working with employers and disabled citizen to enforce this legislation. ~~I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many who made this legislation possible through their hard work and through their dedication, specifically President Bush, Members of Congress, others having worked for years like those with disabilities, and all Americans concerned about those with disabilities.~~

The number of Americans with disabilities are increasing as

the population is growing older and medical technology advancements are successful in keeping the youngest of newborns alive. Individuals with disabilities continue to face outright discrimination which is pervasive throughout our society. Time and time again these individuals have experienced discrimination in various critical areas such as employment, education, housing, public accommodations, transportation, communication, recreation, institutions providing health services, voting and other public services.

Let us consider what yield we will experience in terms of opportunities for persons with disabilities. In terms of employment - it will offer accessible environments and reasonable accommodations in the work environment. Transportation being a critical link to the work site will result in accessible public transportation to and from the work sites. Living independently and with dignity means opportunity to participate fully in every activity of daily life, be it going to the movies, dinning in a restaurant, cheering at a baseball game, communicating by telephone or going to the doctor. The technical assistance efforts mandated in ADA will support two efforts critical to the mission of ADA: First, they will inform persons with disabilities about their rights under the law; and second, provide the necessary support to business and industry as they undertake the important job of implementing the law.

In the ADA bill, we have not made exceptions for any particular form of disability. While this bill offers a legal recourse to redress discrimination for persons with disabilities, we have included the mentally retarded and those with cerebral palsy, even though many people fear and misunderstand those disabilities. We have included the deaf and the blind, even though many people misunderstand those disabilities, and the capabilities of those

persons. We have also included people with AIDS and other diseases, even though there are is a lot of fear and misunderstanding around a variety of diseases. We have included all people with disabilities because that's what this bill is all about -- replacing misunderstanding with understanding. We have not said that you have to employ a person in a job if they are not qualified, they really cannot do or in a setting where they will pose a danger to the health or safety of other people. What we have said in this legislation is that employment decisions must be made about individuals, not groups and must be based on facts, not fears.

We have paid dearly for our policies of the past-- discrimination costs, both in human terms and financial terms. Keeping people with disabilities out of the work force and dependent on Government subsidies is a policy of the past. Under the ADA bill, we all are winners, because it will allow additional persons to utilize their full potential in strengthening the work force. The American with Disabilities Act will enrich our Nation by supporting the talents, skills and abilities of a disadvantaged group which has up until now been on the sidelines. I can envision that this legislation is important enough that we could be back revisiting it again in a year or two, making changes for the better I would hope. I am optimistic that a new tone has been set by this Act as we enter a new decade.