

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 1988

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Under your leadership the United States has always kept human rights on the forefront of the U.S.-Soviet agenda. I am writing today to ask that you take the opportunity of your New York meeting with President Mikhail Gorbachev to remind him of an important, but non-controversial human rights issue: greater understanding, participation and acceptance for people with disabilities around the world. As I suggested to Gorbachev last May, perhaps U.S. and Soviet rededication to the International Decade of Disabled Persons is one human rights issue upon which we could readily agree.

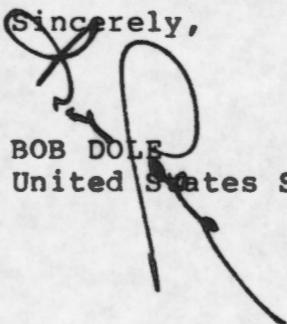
Your proclamation of a U.S. National Decade of Disabled Persons demonstrated America's commitment to its citizens with disabilities. Just a few weeks ago, the first presidential election held under the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act reminded us of the great strides we have taken, and of the leadership the United States can offer the world on this issue. Much remains to be done.

The International Decade stands as a symbol of hope to the world's half billion people with disabilities. What a difference it would make if the United States and the Soviet Union could join together, cooperate, and lead the way toward realizing the full potential of people with disabilities in every country on earth. Maybe working together on this initiative could even help the Soviet government appreciate the importance of the human rights issues which still divide us.

Under your leadership the United States has remained firm in its ideals and cautious about its approach to Gorbachev's Soviet Union. We understand that only fundamental changes in the Soviet Union can lead to fundamental change in our relationship with them. Still, you have been compassionate to welcome any turn for the better in the Soviet Union, and wise to recognize that big things start with small steps.

I believe that joint dedication to the International Decade of Disabled Persons is an important, but easy step which we can take now. I hope you will raise it with President Gorbachev.

Sincerely,



BOB DOLE
United States Senate

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