



National Council on the Handicapped

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An Independent Federal Agency

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To: Members and Friends of the Disability Community

From: Sandra S. Parrino, Chairperson *SSP*

Subject: Introduction of Council's Equal Opportunity Proposal

As you may know, the National Council on the Handicapped, in its report Toward Independence, stated as one of its primary recommendations to the President and Congress:

Congress should enact a comprehensive law requiring equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, with broad coverage and setting clear, consistent, and enforceable standards prohibiting discrimination on the basis of handicap.

Even before that, in its 1983 "National Policy for Persons with Disabilities," the Council had responded to calls of the disability community by adopting equal rights for people with disabilities as one of its priority concerns. In 1986, the Council-launched Harris Poll of Americans with Disabilities reported that a near consensus of persons with disabilities (75%) believe that expanded nondiscrimination protection for persons with disabilities is needed.

Working with many disability advocates and legislative experts, the Council has developed a draft bill -- "The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988." A copy of the proposed bill is enclosed, with a fact sheet concerning the bill and a section-by-section summary.

The Council is happy to announce that Senators Lowell Weicker and Tom Harkin and Representatives Tony Coelho, Silvio Conte, and Major Owens have pledged to lead Congressional action on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Introduction of the bill is scheduled to occur on April 29.

By developing this proposed legislation, the Council has fulfilled one of its primary statutory responsibilities -- to develop legislative recommendations for the Congress and the President. While we are aware that this is only a first step in what is often a lengthy legislative process, we hope that you agree with us that the introduction of this bill is a historic step in the struggle by disabled persons and their families to achieve equality, independence, and dignity in our society.