



## National Council on the Handicapped

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Washington, DC 20591  
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An Independent Federal Agency

November 12, 1987

To: National Council on the Handicapped

From: Robert L. Burgdorf Jr. (Initials on Original)

Subject: Attached drafts of Americans with Disabilities Act bill

Enclosed you will find two versions of a bill to establish a comprehensive equal opportunity law for persons with disabilities. The first, which is dated October 15, 1987, was produced by the Legislative Counsel of the Senate directly from the Council's version of the bill, which was discussed at the last two Council meetings.

The second version is dated November 12 and represents the Legislative Counsel's print-up of a current version of the bill. This version is based upon the October 15 draft, but reflects changes recommended by Senatorial staff, disability rights attorneys, and representatives of (primarily) Washington-based consumer and service provider organizations.

The most significant difference between the two versions is that the earlier draft included coverage of the Federal Government, Federal contractors, and Federal grantees, in addition to public accommodations, housing, transportation, employment, and activities of state and local governments, while the later draft takes what I call the "doughnut approach" and covers the latter types of discrimination but does not address areas of discrimination already encompassed by sections 501, 503, and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. There are a number of other changes, but many of these represent what I believe are very useful and prudent clarifications and elaborations that are consistent with the intent of the earlier draft. The changes in the language are scheduled to be discussed in detail on Monday afternoon of the Council meeting next week. To assist with this discussion, Mrs. Parrino has requested staff to prepare a side-by-side type of presentation of the two versions of the bill, along with an explanation of any changes, but we wanted to get the two versions out to you now so that you can have the opportunity to read them before the meeting.

It is clear that the bill is beginning to pick up some of the momentum that we hoped it would. Due to efforts of Council members and the Chairperson, Senators Weicker and Harkin, and representatives Coelho and Conte are scheduled to be principal sponsors of the bill. Cosponsorship will be a topic for consideration at the Council meeting. Groups such as DREDF, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Consortium of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, PVA, and many others are beginning to line up in support of the bill. We look forward to a full discussion of the bill, its changes, and status at the Council meeting.



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October 23, 1987

To: Members and Friends of the Disability Community

From: Sandra S. Parrino, Chairperson

Subject: Introduction of Council's Equal Opportunity Proposal

As you know, the National Council on the Handicapped, in its report Toward Independence, stated as its primary recommendation 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.

This recommendation reflected the input of thousands of Americans with disabilities and organizations representing them, and it was widely endorsed after the publication of the report. In 1986, the Council-launched Harris Poll of Americans with Disabilities reported that a near consensus of persons with disabilities favor expanded nondiscrimination protection for persons with disabilities.

I am pleased to report that Senator Lowell Weicker has pledged to initiate action by Congress on this matter by introducing the enclosed bill which was developed by the Council. It follows point by point the Council's legislative proposal in Toward Independence. Senator Weicker has indicated his intent to introduce this bill, entitled "The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1987," in November. We expect the bill will be cosponsored by another influential member of the Senate so that it represents a truly bipartisan commitment to equality of people with disabilities. We also expect to announce soon that the bill will be introduced by leaders in the House of Representatives. We will report to you as soon as our expectations materialize in this regard.

This is an historic moment in the history of the disability rights and independent living movement of people with disabilities and their families in the United States. Obviously, the introduction of this landmark legislation is only one very important step in the struggle for equality and opportunity which dates back centuries.

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The bill which Senator Weicker will introduce goes far beyond the original provisions of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and extends across the whole gamut of social and economic endeavors to ensure equal opportunity and protection against discrimination on the basis of handicap. We know a great struggle lies before us in the process of securing these rights, but we believe that the sacrifices and commitments which we will be called upon to make in securing our equality will be well justified.

I hope you join us in celebrating this major step forward in the recognition of rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities. We are beginning to hear from organizations and individuals who want to register their opinion about this historic legislation. Please feel free to write us expressing your views and those of your organizations in regard to this proposed legislation.

I look forward to hearing from you.