

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 28, 1994
To: Senator Dole
From: Alec Vachon
Re: ADA ANXIETY AND ADVICE TO DISABILITY GROUPS; CONVERSATION
WITH TONY COELHO

GETTING THE DISABILITY GROUPS FOCUSED

- * As you know, disability groups are anxious about possible "attacks" on ADA--prompted in part by comments by several Republican members--e.g., Gingrich, Lott--responding to media questions. Frankly, Lott and Gingrich's remarks seemed innocuous, but this concern has been whipped up by "Dear Friend" letters from disability groups. EXAMPLE BY ALAN REICH ENCLOSED.
- * However, there are some objective reasons for concern. In a CNN/USA/GALLUP POLL released on December 2nd, 43% favored repealing some aspects of ADA, with 41% opposed. FULL POLL RESULTS ATTACHED.
- * I suggest the following actions to disability groups:
 1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.
 - * A key anxiety is about unfunded mandates legislation. As I will describe in another memo on unfunded mandate legislation, both the Kempthorne bill and the Contract with America contain specific exemptions for any bill or regulation that "establishes or enforces any statutory rights that prohibit discrimination on the basis of . . . handicapped or disability status."
 - * Remarkably, disability lobbyists I have not even read the bills. Marca Bristo came in.
 2. UNDERSTAND HOW THIS ISSUE IS MEDIA DRIVEN
 3. THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT YOUR MESSAGE AND STRATEGY
 - DISCUSS ADA AS A WIN-WIN FOR BOTH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.
 - As ADA and section 504.
 - JOIN FORCES WITH TRADITIONAL REPUBLICAN CONTITUENCIES. Veterans.
 4. SENATOR DOLE CANNOT CARRY ALL THE WATER--REACH OUT TO REPUBLICANS--AND DEMOCRATS AS WELL

--Despite your strong support, this office cannot do all the work.

--I ask "Do you know who Senator Daschle disability person is, or Senator Lott, or Congressman Gingrich?" The answer has been invariably "no."

--Further, many members don't know a lot about disability. Labor Committee staff.

5. SUPPORT SENATOR DOLE'S INITIATIVES

Not a one-way street.

CONVERSATION WITH TONY COELHO

- * I heard a rumor that Tony had spoken with Gingrich about ADA--and called Tony. He in fact had spoken with Gingrich recently about ADA. They entered Congress together in 1979 and have a longstanding relationship. Coelho reported his conversation w/Gingrich went like this:

--Coelho reminded Newt that in 1989 he came to him and asked him to designate Republican members to work on ADA. Newt designated Cong. Steve Bartlett (now Mayor of Dallas) and Cong. Steve Gunderson. Coelho appreciated Gingrich's help then, which kept ADA from becoming partisan (and Bush got a lot of credit).

--Coelho was calling to make sure Newt was not going back on their original discussion--not as a threat, but Coelho would have to take this issue on if he were.

--Newt replied that his commitment still stood--that any action on ADA--hearings or whatever--would be bipartisan, and that the disability community would be involved. Newt felt that sometimes the intent of a bill was lost in the regulations or enforcement, and at the very least needed periodic review. Coelho asked Newt if it was okay to pass on the substance of their conversation, and Newt said, "yes."

- * Coelho has heard that Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), incoming House majority whip, is very negative about ADA. Incidentally, DeLay announced on December 14th formation of Project Relief, a coalition to advocate reform of the government regulatory process. Project Relief's chairman is Bruce Gates, vice president of the National American Wholesale Grocers' Association.