

96.

Congressman Edward I. Koch news release

(Democrat-Liberal)
18th Congressional District
New York (Manhattan)

for further information:
Washington Office
1126 Longworth Office Building
(202) 225-2436
Diane M. Coffey

NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.-Kans.)
New Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521

For Release Tuesday, April 19, 1977

KOCH AND DOLE PRESS FOR A "TELEPHONE FOR THE DEAF" (TTY) ON CAPITOL HILL

Washington, D.C....Congressman Edward I. Koch (D-L/NYC) and Senator Robert Dole (R-Kans.) today jointly introduced legislation in the House and the Senate to provide for special equipment on Capitol Hill to enable hearing impaired individuals to communicate with members of Congress.

This telecommunications device, known as a TTY, operates by having each party alternately type out their portion of the conversation. Communications received through this terminal would be handled by a special operator who would transmit the message to the appropriate Congressional office and arrange for reply, which could also be transmitted by personal staff members or Members of Congress via the TTY.

These machines are already in operation in several government agencies, including the IRS and at HEW. A TTY communication differs from a telegram or regular mail contact as it allows for an immediate ongoing teletype conversation between participants.

Congressman Koch, who is active in issues concerning handicapped individuals and has introduced other legislation designed to help the disabled, said the idea for the TTY on Capitol Hill originated in a meeting between himself and a group of his New York constituents who are deaf. Senator Dole was instrumental in obtaining the recent FCC reservation of "Line 21" on television screens, which permits closed captioning of television programs. In addition, he provided a special sign language interpretation of his address before the Republican National Convention last August.

In a joint letter to the House and Senate Leadership, Koch and Dole argued the need for the legislation:

"By establishing an 800-number TTY here on Capitol Hill, we would be able to have communication with over ten thousand similar machines across the country, many of which are located at central sites where the hearing impaired can use them. It is strange that although the deaf can now speak to IRS officials with the TTY, they are denied that same access to their Senators and Congressmen."

* * * * *