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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
NOVEMBER 20, 1993

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DOLE CITES MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON BEHALF OF DISABLED AS SESSION  
WINDS DOWN

I am happy to report some major new accomplishments on behalf of people with disabilities. In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, determined to forge a national policy of full participation of people with disabilities in American society. Although much work remains to be done, we are making progress.

National Service

In the National Service bill, I sponsored a provision to provide grants to outreach programs to recruit people with disabilities into national service programs. Too often people with disabilities have been the objects of volunteer service rather than providers. Although well meant, it is past time they have the same opportunities for service and be held to the same standard of citizen duties as other Americans. This year, the Corporation on National and Community Service will spend upwards of \$3 million on these grants.

Human Rights

In July, I introduced a bill that would make it American foreign policy to regard discrimination against people with disabilities as a human rights violation. This bill would also direct the Secretary of State to report such violations in the State Department's annual human rights report. As I said then, "America's greatest export has been its concept of human rights. I sincerely hope this measure will not only encourage people with disabilities all over the world, but prompt other governments and non-governmental organizations interested in human rights to take close interest in the circumstances of people with disabilities."

This year's Foreign Operations appropriations conference report requested the Secretary of State to report violations of human rights of the disabled. I plan to continue to pursue this matter vigorously next year.

Crime

To my knowledge, this was the first major crime bill that recognized the high risks of violence and abuse faced by people with disabilities. I sponsored a provision that would expand the definition of hate crimes to include people with disabilities -- such as arson of group homes for people with mental retardation. Other provisions would create for the first time penalties for such crimes in federal law, and allow criminal background checks on persons providing home care and personal assistance services.

National Commission on Rehabilitation Services

Unfortunately, all the news isn't good. In September I called upon the Administration to create a National Commission to examine serious failures in the nation's rehabilitation programs, including problems in the federal government's \$2 billion vocational rehabilitation program reported by the GAO in August. So far, the Administration has denied my request.

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