

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROBERT DOLE
ON INSTALLATION OF SENATE CLOSED CAPTIONED PROCEEDINGS
NOVEMBER 18, 1991

Mr. President: Congress has long recognized the importance of providing programs and services that enable people with disabilities to live lives of dignity and independence -- to take part in all that our society offers. Just a year ago Congress passed and the President signed into law the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act guaranteeing the inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream of American society.

As this country fulfills its promise to integrate Americans with disabilities into our towns and communities, it is essential that we realize the obstacles that exist toward that goal. Today I am pleased to join with my colleagues in providing access to our nation's democratic process. For too long proceedings in the U.S. Senate could only be seen or heard by people in this chamber. Hard to believe now, but as recently as 1984, television and radio coverage Senate action was not-existent. Today another barriers to full inclusion in to the democratic process by every American has been removed forever. I am proud to have sponsored S. Res 13 which mandated that Senate proceedings be closed captioned so that EVERY American will have the opportunity to take part in their democratic process. I believe that the more people who participate in our democracy, the stronger it becomes. No individual should be denied that right due to lack of access to the process. Our viewers may not always like what they see. But they will have the opportunity to judge for themselves whether they are being well-served by their elected leaders. It is time to extend that opportunity.

Mr. President, in addition to making Senate proceedings available to the approximately 29 million Americans who are hearing impaired, two million of whom are profoundly deaf these proceedings will also open new doors for those with learning disabilities, and those using english as a second language.

Studies have shown that captioning improves the vocabulary and comprehension of remedial readers. Additionally, those working with illiterate adults have found that captioning is effective in motivating adults to learn reading skills.