

DOLE ANNOUNCES OLD SENATE CHAMBER NOW ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED; SHOWS CONGRESS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS ADA DUTIES

WASHINGTON. D.C.--Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) announced today that the Old Senate Chamber has been made accessible to people who use wheelchairs or have other mobility impairments. Until today, two steps at the entrance of the room made it impossible for wheelchair users to enter.

In a letter to Architect of the Capitol George M. White last week, Dole asked that the Old Senate Chamber be accessible by the opening of the 104th Congress on January 4, 1995. The new ramp is temporary until a permanent ramp can be installed.

Dole also wrote, "In my view, the Capitol Building itself is an important symbol of our open and representative government, and that it should be equally available to all Americans."

Dole said today, "In my view, making accommodations for people with disabilities is often more a matter of will than money. I understand that this new ramp cost about \$xxx. What I don't understand is why it wasn't done sooner, but I'm just glad it has been done now."

According to the Congressional Special Services Office (CSSO), which arranges tours and other services for visitors with disabilities, at least 1,500 wheelchair users visited the Capitol in 1994, and another 4,000 persons with other disabilities requested special tours.

Located on the second floor of the Capitol Building, the Old Senate Chamber is a recreation of how the Senate Chamber looked between 1810 and 1859. It is among the most popular visitor spots in the Capitol Building.

Dole also said today, "Making the Old Senate Chamber is clear evidence of our commitment to obeying the laws that we set for other Americans. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by January 26, 1995, state and local governments are supposed to have completed all architectural and structural changes to make their services accessible. I expect the Senate will have completed all its mandatory renovations by then as well."

Dole said his staff would meet with the Architect of the Capitol to ensure all mandatory architectural modifications would be completed by January 26th.

Dole is a longtime advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. Severely wounded during World War II, Dole has only limited use of his right arm. On April 14, 1969, Dole made his "maiden" speech to the Senate as the junior Senator from Kansas, and spoke about disability as both a personal issue and his vision of a national disability policy based on the values of

dignity, independence, and security. Dole has been active on virtually every major piece of disability legislation in the past 25 years and a sponsor of many key bills.

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[draft; 12/30/94]

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOLE ANNOUNCES OLD SENATE CHAMBER NOW ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED

WASHINGTON -- Incoming Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole announced today that a ramp has been installed to make the Old Senate Chamber in the U.S. Capitol accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs or have other mobility impairments. In a December 29 letter to Architect of the Capitol George M. White, Dole asked that the necessary construction be completed by the opening of the 104th Congress.

"This ramp is a welcome mat for people with disabilities. In my view, the Capitol is an important symbol of our open and representative government, and it should be equally available to all Americans," Dole stated.

Located on the second floor of the Capitol Building, the Old Senate Chamber, where the Senate resided from 1810-1859, is among the most popular visitor attractions in the Capitol Building. According to the Congressional Special Services Office, which arranges tours and other services for visitors with disabilities, at least 1,500 wheelchair users visited the Capitol in 1994, and another 4,000 persons with other disabilities requested special tours.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, state and local governments must complete any architectural and structural changes needed to make their services accessible by January 26, 1995. Dole said his staff would meet with the Architect of the Capitol to ensure all mandatory architectural modifications would be complete by the designated deadline.

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