

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1984

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

NATIONAL EASTER SEAL SOCIETY PROJECT FOR ACCESSIBLE VOTING

Manchester, New Hampshire

There are some 36 million persons with disabilities and, of that number, two-thirds are of voting age. Many of the elderly and disabled community do not vote because polling places are inaccessible, they are not able to get to those sites, or they have not registered. This Easter Seal Public Awareness Project will encourage and assist elderly and disabled citizens to have a voice in America's electoral process," said Dole.

Two years ago we extended and strengthened the Voting Rights Act, which has been so instrumental in striking down legal barriers to the political process which disenfranchised blacks and other minorities. We should now move to strike down those physical barriers which just as effectively disenfranchise so many elderly and disabled citizens," said Dole.

The Easter Seal Society is part of a coalition of more than 50 that have been lobbying for the passage of "The Equal Access to Voting Rights Act" (H.R. 1250 and S. 1676) which has now been scheduled for hearings by the House Elections Task Force on March 8 and the Senate Rules Committee on March 21.

I strongly support this proposed legislation which will require polling places and voter registration sites for federal elections to be located in facilities providing permanent or temporary access over ramps or other means to individuals in wheelchairs," said Dole. "It mandates that supplemental and registration aids be made available to handicapped and elderly persons. Finally, the legislation allows individuals who require assistance in casting their votes to designate persons of their choice to assist them.

Currently, state laws vary widely in their provisions for structural accessibility and aid to the disabled voter. This bill ensures uniformity among state voting processes and access for all disabled Americans.