

News from Senator

# BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

DISABILITY RIGHTS EDUCATION AND DEFENSE FUND  
PRESS CONFERENCE WITH ITZHAK PERLMAN

Monday, September 26, 1983

WASHINGTON -- I am pleased to have been invited to participate in this initial public awareness and fundraising campaign sponsored by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund. This is primarily an effort to develop positive attitudes about disabled adults and children. The spokesperson for the campaign will be Mr. Itzhak Perlman, whom all of you will recognize as the world famous violinist.

This public awareness project will include a benefit concert to be held at the Kennedy Center on October 1, 1984, featuring Mr. Perlman. In addition, there will be a one-hour PBS special about how disabled people are being integrated into the social, political and economic mainstream of American life. That program will also be hosted by Mr. Perlman.

This represents the first major public awareness effort by disabled people to change the stereotype of us as dependent and incompetent human beings. Over the past three years, disabled people have become an increasingly powerful political force, seizing every opportunity to change the attitudes of society, so that we can become respected, contributing members of that society. In the process of being integrated, disabled people become a potentially powerful economic force, as they are given opportunities to become independent, productive citizens.

Disabled people represent an abundance of untapped resources for this country. Even while much progress has been made in overcoming architectural and transportation barriers, attitudinal barriers continue to remain a last, difficult obstacle. That is why the work of DREDF is so important. Laws can only do so much -- they can be enforced, but along with policy changes must come attitudinal changes and acceptance. We should all strive toward these goals.

As both a public and private citizen, I would like to underline the fact that this campaign is of great importance to our society as a whole. This country has always represented a land of opportunity to those less fortunate, whether due to economic or other circumstances. The American public, as well as policy makers, must become aware that, as a society, it is to our benefit to integrate disabled people into all aspects of community life. Their abilities are many and should be utilized and accepted. Mr. Perlman is a truly superlative inspiration to all those who seek to surmount their potential disabilities and share their talents with the rest of us. He has set a shining example of courage and strength and beauty for us all.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that Senator Lowell Weicker, Congressmen Tony Coelho, Claude Pepper and myself will serve as cosponsors of the Kennedy Center benefit concert. Vice President and Mrs. George Bush have agreed to serve as the co-chairpersons of the gala following the musical event.