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REMARKS BY SENATOR BOB DOLE  
NATIONAL REHABILITATION INFORMATION CENTER DEDICATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THURSDAY, SEPTS. 27, 1979

THIS AFTERNOON IS A HISTORIC OCCASION FOR EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER BELIEVED THAT SOCIETY HAS A STAKE IN THE FULLEST POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OR THE TALENTS AND ASPIRATIONS OF HER HANDICAPPED CITIZENS. MORE THAN A MORAL COMMITMENT, WE HAVE A PRACTICAL NEED TO EXTRACT EVERY OUNCE OF ABILITY, EVERY IDEAL, EVERY CONVICTION THAT HANDICAPPED AMERICANS POSSESS.

TODAY WE DEDICATE MORE THAN A BUILDING. WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD THE HANDICAPPED. WE ACKNOWLEDGE PUBLICLY THAT SYMPATHY IS NO LONGER GOOD ENOUGH. WE SAY THAT INDEPENDENCE IS BETTER THAN DEPENDENCE, AND OPPORTUNITY BETTER THAN PATERNALISM.

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WE ACCEPT THAT EVEN COMPASSION IS, BY ITSELF, A POOR  
SUBSTITUTE FOR GIVING THE HANDICAPPED MAN OR WOMAN THE  
TOOLS TO REALIZE THEIR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DREAMS.

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, WE CANNOT GO BACK - EVER AGAIN -  
TO BENIGN NEGLECT OR CALLOUS INDIFFERENCE. THE HANDICAPPED  
WILL BE HEARD, AND THEIR VOICE WILL BE HEEDED.

AS WE GATHER FOR THIS CEREMONY, THREE BILLS AWAIT ACTION  
IN THE CONGRESS - BILLS WHICH, PASSED TOGETHER, WILL ASSERT  
A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO HANDICAPPED RIGHTS TO COMPLIMENT  
THE PRIVATE AND EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT ENSHRINED IN THIS  
NEW CENTER.

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I'M PROUD TO BE A CO-SPONSOR OF ALL THREE, AND I ASK EACH OF YOU TO JOIN WITH ME IN RENEWED EFFORTS TO ADOPT SENATE BILL 446, AMENDING THE 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS BILL TO PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE HANDICAPPED IN ANY KIND OF PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT.

I ASK YOUR SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1694, WHICH WOULD EXTEND PERMANENTLY TAX INCENTIVES TO REMOVE ARCHITECTURAL OR TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS IN THE WAY OF THE HANDICAPPED.

I ASK YOUR HELP IN PASSING SENATE BILL 10, GIVING TO THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME SPECIFIC AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE LEGAL ACTION TO ENFORCE THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER FEDERALLY GUARANTEED RIGHTS OF THE HANDICAPPED.

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THEIR EARLY PASSAGE WILL HASTEN THE DAY WHEN OUR COMMITMENT TO THE HANDICAPPED IS AS SOLID AS THE WALLS OF THIS CENTER, WHEN OUR SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMIC AND CAREER GOALS CHERISHED BY HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS IS WRITTEN IN THE IMPERISHABLE INK OF FEDERAL LAW, AND OUR SOCIETY'S OBLIGATION AND INTEREST ARE ENSHRINED IN THE HUMAN HEART.

FOR MUCH OF MY LIFE, I HAVE KNOWN THE PROBLEMS AND THE UNIQUE POTENTIAL THAT GOES WITH BEING HANDICAPPED IN AMERICA. I COUNT AMONG MY PROUDEST MEMORIES THE ASSOCIATIONS I'VE HAD WITH BLIND OR DEAF OR CRIPPLED OR EMOTIONALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE OF ALL AGES. THEY HAVE SHOWN ME MORE THAN STRENGTH, MORE THAN COURAGE. THEY HAVE SHOWN ME THE FIBER THAT MADE AMERICA HERSELF THE WORLD'S GREATEST LAND.

AMERICA REMAINS GREAT BECAUSE WE REMAIN STRONG, AND TRUE TO THE IDEALS OF INDIVIDUAL SELF-REALIZATION THAT ATTENDED HER BIRTH. EVERY TIME A CRIPPLED CHILD WALKS OR A BLIND MAN ENTERS A NEW WORLD THROUGH BRAILE, WE CAN ALL HOLD OUR HEADS A LITTLE HIGHER.

TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL OPERATE THIS INFORMATION CENTER, AND TO THE UNIVERSITY WHOSE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT MAKES IT POSSIBLE, I ASK FOR GOD'S BLESSING UPON YOUR WORK. MAY YOU CONTINUE TO INSPIRE THOSE WITH WHOM YOU COME IN CONTACT, EVEN AS WE IN PUBLIC LIFE WHO SHARE YOUR COMMITMENTS FIGHT ON TOWARD THAT DAY, HOPEFULLY NOT TOO DISTANT, WHEN EVERY AMERICAN IS AFFORDED AS A MATTER OF COURSE HIS OR HER OPPORTUNITY TO REALIZE THE DREAM WE CALL OUR OWN.

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