



Keeping the Promise of the ADA

There are several simple things you can do **right now** to get on the road to freedom, and help the Americans with Disabilities Act reach its potential:

1 Sign the ADA Petition.

You can sign this petition in person if you see us on tour this year or go to www.roadtofreedom.org. Help show that America cares!

2 Contact Congress.

It's not as hard as it sounds. Simply go to www.roadtofreedom.org. We will provide you with the facts you need and contact information.

3 Sign up for News and Alerts.

An educated community is an empowered community. Sign up at our site, and we'll keep you up-to-date on the difference you are making.

4 Join an Organization.

If you are a person with a disability, a family member, an advocate – or just someone who cares about people with disabilities – there are organizations that need your support. Find out about our state and local partners at www.ncdr.org.

5 Donate to ADA Watch and the National Coalition for Disability Rights.

We are a nonprofit alliance of hundreds of disability, civil rights and social justice organizations united to protect and advance the ADA. Send even a small amount, and you'll be amazed at the difference it can make. Your generous contribution provides financial support for our advocacy work on behalf of our children and adults with physical, mental, cognitive and developmental disabilities.

Thank you in advance for your help – and see you on the road!



Jim Ward
President, ADA Watch and the
National Coalition for Disability Rights

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**THE
ROAD TO
FREEDOM**
National Coalition for Disability Rights
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See inside for
**5 Simple Things
You Can Do**
to Help Keep the Promise of the
Americans with Disabilities Act



Get on the Road to Freedom!



A Project of ADA Watch and the
National Coalition for Disability Rights

Get on the The Road to Freedom!

You may be familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed into law in 1990. The ADA promised to bring down the walls of discrimination and provide equal access to the “American Dream” for people with disabilities – from simple curb cuts in our sidewalks to equal opportunity in education and employment.

But did you know that this dream is in danger?

- Children with disabilities are routinely denied admission into childcare, voucher programs and charter schools.
- Archaic healthcare regulations still force people with disabilities out of their homes and communities and into isolated – and often abusive – nursing facilities and institutions.
- The unemployment rate of people with disabilities is up to 70%; the poverty rate twice that of people with no disabilities.

There are easy but powerful ways you can help us keep the promise of the ADA. Join us on the Road to Freedom!



What is The Road to Freedom?

The Road To Freedom is a national awareness campaign inspired by the historic journey of Justin and Yoshiko Dart to mobilize support for passage of the ADA. Our cross country bus journey begins in Washington, DC and aims to engage audiences across the United States in the story of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the history of the disability rights movement. We hope to mobilize Americans (like you!) to keep the promise of the ADA – freedom, inclusion, and opportunity for children and adults with physical, mental, cognitive and developmental disabilities.

Throughout this year long journey, national and state disability leaders will be joined by young people with disabilities to restore and strengthen the ADA.

Here's how we'll get the word out:

- The Road to Freedom bus will stop at more than 80 locations nationwide, from disability conferences to sporting events to malls and parades.
- Tom Olin's stunning photographs of the struggle for disability rights, shown here, will be the centerpiece of our traveling exhibit. Olin's work has been featured at the Smithsonian Institute. This exhibit also includes a narrative of the rights of the disability rights movement and ADA.
- We plan press conferences, radio shows and TV interviews highlighting both the obstacles — and the victories— of Americans with disabilities.
- The tour will visit schools and colleges to design youth curriculum, working with our partners, the National Youth Leadership Network and the National Council on Disability.
- We'll demonstrate technology that is advancing educational and economic opportunities for people with disabilities, with help from the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA).
- A resource library will be available to connect children and adults with disabilities with services, training and more to enhance their participation in society.
- We've created www.roadtofreedom.org, as an online destination for deeper information on the ADA, tour locations and dates, and ideas on how to make a difference.



The Road to the ADA

The history of the ADA did not begin on July 26, 1990 at the signing ceremony at the White House. It did not begin in 1988 when the first ADA was introduced in Congress. The ADA story began a long time ago in cities and towns throughout the United States when people with disabilities began to challenge societal barriers that excluded them from their communities, and when parents of children with disabilities began to fight against the exclusion and segregation of their children.

Like the African-Americans who sat in at segregated lunch counters and refused to move to the back of the bus, people with disabilities sat in federal buildings, obstructed the movement of inaccessible buses, and marched through the streets to protest injustice. And like the civil rights movements before it, the disability rights movement sought justice in the courts and in the halls of Congress.

Spurred by a draft bill prepared by the National Council on Disability, Sen. Weicker and Rep. Coelho introduced the first version of the ADA in April 1988. A Senate hearing was held in September of 1988 and the room overflowed with hundreds of persons with disabilities, parents and advocates. After the hearing, Senators Kennedy and Harkin and Rep. Owens committed that a comprehensive disability civil rights bill would be a top priority for the next Congress.

On May 9, 1989, the new ADA was introduced in the 101st Congress. From that moment, the disability community mobilized, organizing a multi-layered strategy for passage. Congress received boxes loaded with thousands of letters and pieces of testimony from people whose lives had been damaged or destroyed by discrimination.

People with disabilities came from around the country to advocate for the Bill, explaining why each provision was necessary to address a very real barrier or form of discrimination. Individuals came in at their own expense, slept on floors by night and visited Congressional offices by day.

On July 12, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a vote of 377-28. The next day, it passed the Senate on a vote of 91-6. Shortly thereafter, on July 26, 1990, the Act was signed by President George Bush on the South Lawn of the White House in front of over 3,000 disability advocates, the largest bill-signing ceremony that had ever taken place at the White House.

Excerpted from Arlene Mayerson's A History of the ADA

Breaking the Promise of the ADA

"Passage of the ADA sent an unmistakable message: It is unacceptable to discriminate against someone simply because they have a disability. Moreover, it is illegal – in employment, in transportation, in public accommodations, and in telecommunications."

"However, these years have not been without challenge. Too often, the intent of the ADA has been misconstrued by our courts, which have given it a narrow construction that its authors never intended."

— Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Lead House Sponsor of the ADA

Promise: Broad Protections for Americans with All Types of Disabilities

Broken: Courts have narrowly interpreted the ADA. People with diabetes, heart conditions, cancer and mental illnesses have had their ADA claims kicked out of court because, with improvements in medication, they are considered "too functional."

Promise: To End Segregation of People with Disabilities

Broken: The institutional bias in America's healthcare funding system still forces children and adults with disabilities out of their homes and into isolated institutions.

Promise: Equal Access to Employment

Broken: In 2005, only 35 percent of working age people with disabilities were employed compared to 78 percent of people without disabilities.

Promise: Equal Access to Economic Opportunity

Broken: People with disabilities are two-and-a-half times more likely to live in poverty. In 2005, median household income for people with disabilities was \$35,000 compared to \$61,500 for people without disabilities.

Promise: Freedom from Discrimination in the Workplace

Broken: More than 98% of ADA employment-related cases are dismissed – without regard to the alleged discrimination – because judges rule that people with epilepsy, diabetes, mental illness or other disabilities are not "truly" disabled.



THE ROAD TO FREEDOM Keeping the Promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act

1. Detach this form and fill out. 2. Mail this form and donation (if applicable) to The Road to Freedom address below. Thank you!

☐ YES, I'd like to get on The Road To Freedom and help Keep the Promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Enclosed is my donation of: ☐ \$10 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Check Enclosed
Make payable to "Road to Freedom"

☐ Charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express
Card Number _____ Exp Date _____ Signature _____

☐ Yes, please keep me informed of your progress with Road To Freedom Alerts
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
E-mail address _____

Mail form to this address:
The Road to Freedom
1201 Pennsylvania Avenue
NW Suite 300
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We need your help to keep the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act! See the attached flap for 5 things you can do right now to help.