

✓cc: Sarah Trahern

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Midland, Texas 79707

May 21, 1990

C-SPAN  
400 North Capitol Street, NW  
Suite 650  
Washington, DC 20001

Gentlemen:

As the editor and publisher of disABILITY NEWS-letter, a desktop publication about issues pertaining to the handicapped, I depend a great deal upon C-SPAN's coverage of legislation affecting the disabled. I was glad to see your network's extensive airing during May 15-17, 1990 of the debates and amendment votes of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 by the United States House of Representatives, as your call-in host Brian Lamb pointed out to me when I called his show Friday morning, May 16, 1990. But I still must point out two glaring minuses about C-SPAN's still relatively lacking coverage of disability-related topics:

1. Even though C-SPAN presented most or all of the House's debates and votes related to the ADA bill with a sign-language interpreter windowed in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, it is unfortunate the network does not provide the same service during ALL legislative events or even all the time. Unless C-SPAN has constant closed captioning for the hearing-impaired, its modest offering of sign-language interpretation in this special instance is of little benefit.

2. When I called in to his call-in show last Friday morning, Mr. Lamb with apparent irritation to my question pointed out the large amount of coverage of the ADA debates and amendment votes. However, he avoided my question. My question was, "Why didn't C-SPAN ever devote more or any of its call-in shows to problems of the disabled?" I still ask that question. Despite last year's United States Senate passage of the ADA and last week's House business with the act, I have not seen during the past year even one of C-SPAN's call-in shows devoted to the handicapped. On the other hand, I've seen numerous call-in programs discussing subjects related to the elderly, nursing homes, social security, civil rights (but in terms of blacks and other legally defined minorities), catastrophic health care, abortion, the savings and loan scandals, Iran/Contra, Dan Quayle, cable television and many other topics. There are representatives from almost too many organizations and agencies within and outside Washington, DC, willing and able to discuss disability issues. Those groups include the National Organization of the Disabled, the National Association for the Physically Handicapped, the Paralyzed American Veterans and the Coalition of Americans with Disabilities, to name only a very few.

(more)

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Moreover, it is this second deficiency of C-SPAN's coverage of disability issues in its call-in programs which is personally offensive to me and other handicapped persons. Is it because the problems of the disabled appear insignificant compared to those other "normal" categories of people, such as the elderly or blacks? I submit to your staff that the disabled may have even more serious problems in terms of accessible housing or gainful employment than most other afflicted groups. Most handicapped people HAVE to stay on social security or supplemental security income in order to retain their Medicare and Medicaid benefits because getting even minimum wage jobs, which normally do not offer health care insurance, endangers them to be left without any medical benefits. And I offer my own personal testimony to my argument: I am a paraplegic unable to drive (yet) and live in a small city without any accessible transit service. And in spite of my just completing a BA in mass communications, writing during my 11 years of college for four university publications at various times AND editing, writing and publishing since 1989 a newsletter for the handicapped (an issue from last year I have enclosed with this letter), no professional newspaper in Texas during the past year has yet accepted my resumes and applications for employment.

Although I am aware of possible scheduling difficulties your network may have, I still believe that C-SPAN's call-in shows, which are its most popular feature with cable viewers, should devote much more time to disability issues. If I can be of any help to C-SPAN in getting knowledgeable hosts or providing background research, I request that your staff contact me at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Editor and Publisher  
disABILITY NEWS-letter

cc

Enclosure: One (1) issue of disABILITY NEWS-letter No. 3.



## disABILITY NEWS-letter

## Addresses

To acquire a complete copy of the 1989 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT or to comment about it, write to The Subcommittee of the Handicapped, Committee on Labor and Human Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510-6300.

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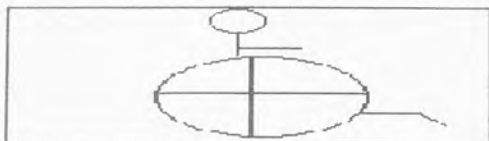
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## Congress to consider merits of new disability legislation

By  
Editor and Publisher

Mandating more accessibility in public transportation, housing and private sector employment, the "Americans with Disabilities Act of 1989" will be considered by the United States Congress late this summer and during the fall.

Sponsored by U.S. Senator Tomarkin and 33 other senators, the 36-page act was introduced to the senate May 9.

"The ADA extends civil rights protections for people with disabilities to cover such areas as employment in the private sector, public accommodations ... services provided by state and local governments, transportation, and telecommunications relay services," states a news release from Sen. Markin's Washington, DC office.

The news release also states that more than 85 national organizations have endorsed the legislation, including disability and religious groups

and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, representing 185 civil rights associations.

The 33 senators sponsoring the Act include such Democratic party notables as past presidential candidates as Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-NY), Sen. Albert Gore, Jr. (D-TN) and Sen. Paul Simon (D-ILL).

Republican sponsors of the measure are Sen. David Burenberger (R-MN), Sen. Bob Packwood (R-Oregon) and Sen. John M. Chafee (R-RI).

Although disability rights advocates expect the ADA will have large support for passage in Congress, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) opposes some provisions in the bill.

"In terms of its coverage of public accommodations," a published statement from Hatch's Washington office says, "... it appears to encompass virtually the entire private sector ... [including] not only theaters, restaurants, and hotels but also all sales establishments, ... professional [medical] services ... even though they receive no federal aid or federal contracts."