



Legislation Text

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Recognizing the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and honoring the career of Senator Thomas Harkin who fought tirelessly to advance the rights and improve the quality of life of individuals living with disabilities.

WHEREAS, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the most significant piece of civil rights legislation for individuals with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 25 years the ADA, like other pieces of civil rights legislation, has helped bring about a more inclusive America, one where every person has the right to participate in all sectors of society and be recognized for his or her accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Employment discrimination based on a disability is prohibited. Integration regulations requiring public entities to offer services, programs, and activities in the most integrated setting is now in place and enforced. The ADA has ensured millions of people with disabilities have the opportunity to live productive and meaningful lives in the community; and

WHEREAS, Recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the ADA would not be complete without recognizing the significant contributions of Senator Thomas Harkin, the primary author of the ADA; and

WHEREAS, Senator Harkin has dedicated his life to public service beginning in 1962 when he was an active-duty jet pilot in the United States Navy, where he continued to serve in the Naval Reserves through 1989; and

WHEREAS, Senator Harkin's 40 year career in Congress started in 1975 in the United States House of Representatives, and continued in the United States Senate from 1985 to 2015; and

WHEREAS, Senator Harkin saw firsthand the barriers individuals with disabilities confronted because his brother Frank was deaf since childhood. Senator Harkin knew limited job opportunities were available to Frank because there were no legal protections from employment discrimination on the basis of a disability and accommodations that make mainstream employment more likely were not required; and

WHEREAS, The ADA has raised awareness of the abilities of individuals with disabilities and has resulted in great progress. The progress of the ADA can be seen in everyday life through curb cuts, communication access, accessible buildings and transportation; and

WHEREAS, Despite these gains, Senator Harkin saw the shortcomings of the ADA when several Supreme Court rulings narrowly limited the scope of those protected under the ADA. His response was the ADA Amendments Act that broadened the definition of disability and increased protections that were intended under the initial legislation; and

WHEREAS, Although he has retired from Congress, Senator Harkin continues to be a voice of the disability

advocacy movement, highlighting the need to do more to ensure independent living and economic self-sufficiency are possible for all individuals with disabilities. His ongoing commitment was evidenced recently by his participation at many of the ADA 25th Anniversary celebrations throughout the country, including our celebration here in Philadelphia on July 25th; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act by honoring the many significant contributions made by Senator Thomas Harkin to advance the rights and improve the quality of life of individuals living with disabilities.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Senator Thomas Harkin, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.