



“Our success with this act proves that we are keeping faith with the spirit of our courageous forefathers who wrote in the Declaration of Independence: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.’ These words have been our guide for more than two centuries as we’ve labored to form our more perfect union. But tragically, for too many Americans, the blessings of liberty have been limited or even denied. The Civil Rights Act of ‘64 took a bold step towards righting that wrong. But the stark fact remained that people with disabilities were still victims of segregation and discrimination, and this was intolerable. Today’s legislation brings us closer to that day when no Americans will ever again be deprived of their basic guarantee of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

***Remarks of President George H. W. Bush at the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act
July 26, 1990***

Today, July 26, 2025, the staff and supporters of Kentucky Protection & Advocacy, Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities, Human Development Institute and State Independent Living Council urge all Kentuckians to celebrate the passage of the ADA and recognize how its passage has improved the lives of every Kentuckian.

Louisville was the focal point of the fight for disability rights in Kentucky. In 1986, disability rights advocates organized protests, such as chaining wheelchairs to bus doors and blocking buses, to demand accessible transportation options. Their bravery captured the attention of the disability community across Kentucky and the nation.

Disability rights advocates across Kentucky organized, strategized, and supported each other. They shared rides, personal care attendants, tears, and a dream. They wanted to live, work, travel, receive health care, shop, and participate in their communities. They knew they had to join their brothers and sisters in Washington, DC, like so many had done before and since, to demand that the American dream become accessible.

On March 12, 1990, over 1,000 people marched from the White House to the U.S. Capitol to demand that Congress pass the ADA. When they got there, people got out of their wheelchairs and other mobility aids and crawled up the Capitol steps. The Capitol Crawl was part of a week of demonstrations in D.C.

Kentuckians Tommy Malone, a Capitol Crawl participant, of Owensboro and Arthur Campbell of Louisville joined Kentucky ADAPT, and numerous others, the day after the Capitol Crawl. They sat arm in arm and chained wheelchairs together in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol to demand the passage of the ADA. They were arrested with 102 other disability rights advocates, held in inaccessible jails in Washington, DC, and when they were released, they rejoined their brothers and sisters with disabilities.

Protests in March of 1990 gave way to President Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990. Even as they celebrated, the advocates in the movement knew this was only the beginning. They educated their families, the public, policy makers, agencies, state and local governments, airlines, hotels, etc. They knew that the ADA wasn't easily won.

As we celebrate the passage of the ADA, it's wise to recognize how fragile it is, even after 35 years. Kentuckians with disabilities remember what life was like before its passage. A world without curb cuts, accessible transportation, accessible information, integrated schools, employment, and community options. The ADA gave Americans with disabilities civil rights. No longer could government and private businesses exclude people just because they had a disability. While significant progress has been made, ongoing challenges highlight the importance of the ADA.

We take this opportunity to say thank you to all who fought and continue to fight for the ADA and the rights of people with disabilities everywhere. Join us as we celebrate this landmark civil rights law and renew our commitment to advancing its promise.

