ADA
THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
SENATOR TOM HARKIN’S LEGACY
A lifetime dedicated to the rights of people with disabilities.

Senator Harkin—inspired by his brother Frank, who was deaf—made expanding the rights of people with disabilities his life’s work and one of his top priorities in Congress. By the time he retired from the U.S. Senate in 2014, Sen. Harkin had amassed an unparalleled record of legislative achievement in disability rights and was well known, both across America and internationally, as a leading advocate for people with disabilities. He always insisted that people with disabilities be included during the drafting of legislation and be treated as partners in decision-making when laws were implemented. The disability advocacy rallying cry “nothing about us without us” became a principle according to which U.S. disability policy was centered upon.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is explained in detail throughout the following pages, has four overarching goals: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. The legislation is divided into five subsections, referred to as Titles, each of which instructs a specific industry or entity on how it must accommodate people with disabilities. Together, these five Titles make the four goals of the ADA achievable. One remarkable note about the ADA is that it is truly bipartisan in nature and has been supported by every administration, regardless of party affiliation, since its passage in 1990.

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“Before the ADA, millions of Americans were denied access to their own communities - and to the American dream. We’ve come so far as a country since the passage of the ADA. But our work is far from over.”

-Sen. Tom Harkin (Retired)

*All language in the following pages is taken directly from the ADA
TITLE 2: PUBLIC SERVICES

Addresses the availability of public services to individuals with disabilities.

Under this section, it is considered discrimination for a public entity to purchase a new bus or vehicle that is not equally accessible to all individuals.

PUBLIC ENTITY:
state or local government, department, agency, special purpose district, and National Railroad Passenger Corporation

PARATRANSIT:
wheelchair and door-to-door accessible transportation provided at request by public entities for those needing special accommodations

Public entities that operate on a fixed route system must provide paratransit services.

CATEGORIES OF TRANSPORTATION
*Mode of transit may fit into more than one

- Demand responsive system (anything providing public transit not on a fixed route)
- Designated public transportation (transportation by bus, rail, or any other conveyance)
- Fixed route system (anything providing public transit on a fixed route and schedule)
- Public school transportation
- Rail passenger car (single and bi-level cars on intercity rail transportation)

PARATRANSIT SERVICES MUST BE PROVIDED TO

1. Any individual with disabilities, physical or mental, unable to utilize any vehicle on the system
2. Any individual with disabilities who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or boarding assistance device
3. Any individual with disabilities who has an impairment-related condition

THE BILL DOES NOT REQUIRE

- Space to fold and store a wheelchair
- A seat to transfer from a wheelchair

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Any individual with disabilities, physical or mental, unable to utilize any vehicle on the system

Any individual with disabilities who needs the assistance of a wheelchair lift or boarding assistance device

Any individual with disabilities who has an impairment-related condition

TITLE 3: PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES OPERATED BY PRIVATE ENTITIES

No person should be discriminated against based on a disability in the full use and equal enjoyment of goods and services at any place of public accommodation.

PRIVATE ENTITY:
any entity that is not, by definition, a public entity (See prior page)

COMMERCIAL FACILITIES:
structures or buildings not intended for residential use or with operations that will affect commerce and must include public accommodations.

- public displays
- social service centers
- places of exercise
- other such locations

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TITLE 4: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Addresses changes to telecommunications made to accommodate various disabilities.

TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICE FOR THE DEAF (TDD):
a communication system machine that uses images to express messages

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission established regulations that set forth minimum standards and created rules for positions such as relay operators who are part of telecommunications systems.

RELAYED CONVERSATIONS CANNOT BE COMMUNICATED IN A WAY OTHER THAN ORIGINALLY INTENDED.

All public service announcements that are produced or funded by the Federal Government must have closed captioning of all verbal content in the announcement.
The Harkin International Disability Employment Summit convened high-level representatives from around the world for the first time in December 2016. In developing countries as well as industrialized nations, people with disabilities are the least likely to be employed and least likely to have economic independence. For the vast majority of those with disabilities, a job seems unattainable—not due to inability, but because of the lack of opportunity and access. The Harkin Summit gathers leaders in disability employment every year to define and create strategies to ensure people with disabilities have not only supported lives, but employed lives, including all the benefits that come with having a job and a career.

Senator Tom Harkin (Retired) is perhaps best known for his legacy of fighting for the rights of people with disabilities. Celebrated nationally as the author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Sen. Harkin was also instrumental—throughout his 40 years in Congress—in paving the way for people with disabilities to access the education and support services needed to thrive in the labor market. In 2014, Sen. Harkin reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity act, ensuring young people with disabilities could access fair employment.

The presence of numerous global disability inclusion leaders at the annual Harkin Summit is an uplifting and motivating demonstration of international commitment to increasing the employment of people with disabilities. Each year, the summit’s agenda is designed to create opportunities for attendees to learn from each other and work together to increase employment opportunities for the more than one billion adults with disabilities around the world.
The Harkin Institute informs citizens, inspires creative cooperation, and catalyzes change on issues of social justice, fairness, and opportunity.

Building on the legacy established by Senator Tom Harkin during his 40 years in public office, The Harkin Institute offers programming and experiences surrounding issues faced by people with disabilities. The institute is a hub for disability policy research, believing that good public policy is best achieved when policymakers have access to high quality information, political processes are open and well-understood, and citizens are informed and active participants.

Along with people with disabilities, The Harkin Institute’s programming focuses on three more areas that defined Sen. Harkin’s career: retirement security, wellness & nutrition, and labor & employment. The Harkin Institute hosts public events and lectures, conducts policy research, provides scholarships, and teaches courses from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

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