

Process Paper

I got the idea for my project when Senator Tom Harkin first announced he would be retiring from the United States Senate. I wanted to learn more about his accomplishments for Iowans and United States citizens, so I began researching his career. Immediately, Harkin's role in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) stood out to me. I was inspired by his leadership throughout the drafting of the bill and the legacy that the bill has created for people with disabilities and the development of an inclusive society. Upon watching the documentary *Lives Worth Living*, I recognized that the ADA was the result of work by a coalition of people with disabilities, organizations, and legislators. I was intrigued by the uniqueness of the bill and its creators. I decided to research the ADA in depth to create a project that would highlight what a groundbreaking bill it was.

My research began with reading articles and watching *Lives Worth Living*, a documentary about the history of American disability rights. I also read several books that focused on the people who propelled disability rights reform. This research helped me to determine who the leaders of the disability rights movement were, what progress for people with disabilities was made prior to the ADA, how the ADA was created, and what its impacts have been. I requested interviews from leaders of the social movements for the ADA and legislators who worked on the bill. I completed interviews with Arlene Mayerson, an attorney who worked on the ADA; Lex Frieden, an activist leader who testified before Congress numerous times; and Senator Harkin, one of the lead sponsors of the ADA. I researched internet sources for photographs and other multimedia of the social demonstrations surrounding the ADA, the various leaders working on the bill, and outcomes of the bill. I then focused on increasing the breadth and depth of my

research by reading oral histories from different leaders of the bill and examining photographs documenting the history of disability in the United States.

I chose to create a website for my project because in order to fully and accurately convey the far-reaching nature of the ADA, I needed a format that would allow me to incorporate photos, quotations, and other multimedia into my project. I began creating the website with the quotations I gathered from books, news articles, interviews, and documentaries. I then added multimedia representing the leaders of the ADA, their activism, and its outcomes. I finished by completing my own analysis of the creation, passage, and consequences of the ADA.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was the culmination of leadership among people with disabilities, disability and civil rights organization leaders, and legislators. It changed the landscape and society of the United States by preventing discrimination based on disability in public infrastructure, education, and employment. The ADA has enabled thousands of Americans with disabilities to attain human rights and opportunities and created a legacy of inclusion and equality that continues today.

Word Count: 500