

Disability Day

Welcome to the Georgia state Capitol and our new Liberty Plaza! It's a privilege to take part once again in **Disability Day** with all of you. I would like first to thank the **Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities** for sponsoring this event and bringing us all together today.

Twenty five years ago, then President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure the civil rights of those citizens with disabilities. This legislation established a clear message throughout the nation and in Georgia that discrimination based on disability must end. President Bush remarked upon signing the bill, "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down." Like those who participated in the Civil Rights movement, many people with disabilities were willing to protest and sacrifice to end the segregation of people with disabilities.

This year, Georgia will be at the center of the national celebration of the ADA.

- At the National Center for Civil and Human Rights there is an exhibit celebrating disability rights.
- The National ADA Symposium and the international Society for Disability Studies will hold their conferences in Atlanta.
 - There will be several opportunities to see the ADA Legacy Bus during these events.

In Georgia, we are committed to improving facilities managed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and creating opportunities for those with disabilities to return to their respective communities as active citizens. In addition, we strive to make sure that no children under the age of 22 are living in nursing facilities, but rather reside with loving and stable families. We continue to make progress by opening new programs on college campuses, like those at Kennesaw State University, Georgia State University, East Georgia State College, and Columbus State University. Next year programs will begin at Georgia Tech and the University of

Georgia. I am also proud to say that we have made progress toward increasing the number of work opportunities for people with disabilities throughout our state.

As your exhibit inside the Capitol reads, we must preserve the past by remembering those who fought for your rights. We must also celebrate our present by commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, and we must continue to educate others about the accomplishments and barriers that still exist for people with disabilities.

With all of this in mind, I was happy to proclaim March as Disability Awareness Month in Georgia and recognize July 26th as the Anniversary of the ADA.