

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY

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PRESS RELEASE

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FDR MEMORIAL WHEELCHAIR STATUE CAMPAIGN EXCEEDS GOAL *Contributions from Children, Disability Organizations and Individuals Will Pay for Memorial Statue to Inspire Disabled and Others Worldwide.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. July 21, 2000 – The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) announced today that it has surpassed the *Rendezvous with Destiny* Campaign goal of \$1.65 million for the addition of a statue of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his wheelchair at the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In making the announcement, N.O.D. President Alan A. Reich thanked people with and without disabilities of all ages for the outpouring of support to build the world's only statue depicting a leading statesman in a wheelchair. Reich stated, "President Roosevelt will be an inspiration to people everywhere for generations to come, in great part because of his disability. He contracted polio in 1921 at age 39, and he never took another step unassisted. His disability experience forged his leadership qualities – determination, courage, compassion and a spirit of optimism."

The Campaign's first donation, \$300, came from students at Lindbergh Elementary School in Palisades Park, New Jersey. Sixth grader Steven Oh wrote, "We got involved in this project because we care about truth...A statue that doesn't show the way he was when he was president is not the best memorial for him. I think we made a difference." Contributions – large and small – poured in from individuals and from organizations sharing N.O.D.'s belief that the statue portraying FDR's triumph over disability will be a significant addition to his Memorial.

Upon realizing in 1996 that the Memorial was to be opened with no depiction of FDR's disability, N.O.D. mobilized more than 50 disability organizations across the country, calling for the addition of a statue of FDR in a wheelchair. In 1997, President Clinton signed legislation directing the Secretary of Interior and the National Park Service to make the addition and mandating that the funds for the statue be raised in the private sector. N.O.D. therefore formed the *Rendezvous with Destiny* Committee, co-chaired by N.O.D. Chairman Michael R. Deland and FDR granddaughter Anne Roosevelt.

In 1999, N.O.D. pressed Congress to add \$3 million in federal spending needed by the National Park Service for construction of the room in which the statue will be located.

The sculpture and the planning for the new room are well underway. N.O.D. is cooperating closely with the National Park Service. "Each day thousands of visitors go through the FDR Memorial not realizing that President Roosevelt served 12 years in the White House as President while using a wheelchair every day. We hope that this wonderful addition to the Memorial will be ready so that President Clinton will be able to dedicate the statue in early 2001 during his final days in office," said Reich.

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The National Organization on Disability was founded in 1982. Its mission is to promote the full and equal participation and contribution of America's 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. N.O.D. is funded entirely by private donations and accepts no government funding. For more information visit www.nod.org.