

Efforts of the National Organization on Disability

In early 1995, the National Organization on Disability learned that there was no planned depiction of FDR's disability in the national memorial that was under construction in Washington, DC. N.O.D. Chairman Michael Deland met with members of the FDR Memorial Commission and requested that FDR be shown in his wheelchair in the Memorial. He presented N.O.D.'s position that by depicting FDR in a wheelchair, the world would know that a person with a disability can become President of the United States. And not showing his disability would perpetuate antiquated stereotypes about limitations of people with disabilities. "I think it would be unconscionable for schoolchildren 50 years from now to go through the Memorial and not have any idea that FDR used a wheelchair", stated Mr. Deland. N.O.D. appealed to the members of the FDR Memorial Commission and particularly its Co Chairmen, Senators Daniel Inouye, and Mark Hatfield repeatedly on this issue. The Commission continued to refuse adding the depiction to the ample 7.5-acre memorial site with 9 statues and bas-reliefs and funded in part by \$42 million in taxpayer money. The campaign was based on the historic fact that during FDR's last 24 years, including all 12 years as president, he never took a step unassisted. He used a wheelchair every day while in the White House. In addition, FDR's triumph over disability was central to the development of his leadership qualities of courage, compassion, and determination. N.O.D. believes that not including FDR's disability in the memorial is an affront to America's 49 million citizens with disabilities, and a half-billion worldwide. Moreover, it is a step backward from the great advance of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

N.O.D.'s position gained nationwide attention and support as scores of editorials, news articles, and news shows covered the debate. A nationwide letter writing campaign brought thousands of letters, faxes, and e-mails into the offices of the FDR Memorial Commission and the White House asking for an honest depiction of FDR. And a N.O.D./Louis Harris Associates survey revealed that 73% of the American public support the depiction of FDR's disability in the memorial.

In late 1996, N.O.D. formed the "FDR in a Wheelchair" campaign committee and hired veteran disability activist and organizer Jim Dickson to serve as Director of the campaign. Mr. Dickson has now joined N.O.D. as Director of Community Affairs (Community Partnership Program) N.O.D. mounted a campaign that generated grassroots activism, rallies, and press coverage on the issue nationwide. A week before the Memorial was dedicated, President Clinton called on Senator Inouye to introduce legislation that would require the addition of a depiction of FDR with his disability in the Memorial. On May 1, 1997, the day before the dedication, the Senate passed this resolution by unanimous vote. A month later, the House passed the resolution, and on July 24, 1997, President Clinton signed the act.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITIES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 13, 1996

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CHANGE DESIGN OF \$42 MILLION FEDERALLY FUNDED FDR MEMORIAL TO PORTRAY HIS DISABILITY, SAY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY LEADERS

N.O.D. Cites Support of Members of Roosevelt Family, Former President Bush, Historians, And Poll of U.S. Public

Washington DC, May 13, 1996 - The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Commission must change the design of a historically inaccurate taxpayer-financed massive Washington memorial to the former president, leaders of the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) said today. President Bill Clinton is Honorary Chairman of the Commission.

N.O.D. sent a letter May 6 to the FDR Memorial Commission which reminded the federal panel that it had made the same request a year ago. N.O.D. has led the battle to see that the memorial will clearly depict the central fact of FDR's adult persona and his leadership... his disability resulting from an attack of polio in 1921.

Eight FDR grandchildren have written to Michael Deland, N.O.D.'s Chairman and Alan Reich, N.O.D.'s President in support of the organization's position. Former President George Bush, media commentators and several prominent historians also have supported the N.O.D. position. A Harris Poll found that 73% of the American public agreed that FDR's disability should be clearly depicted.

Both Deland and Reich have commented publicly on the fact that FDR led the nation out of the depths of the Depression and led the Allies to victory in World War II and that he did it from a wheelchair.

"Portrayal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's disability in the national memorial to him is a must if future generations are to know how truly great he was," said Deland. Speaking for 49 million Americans with disabilities, Deland called on President Clinton, and Commission members to accurately depict FDR as a man who spent most of his adult life using a wheelchair and leg braces. He urged the Commission to "do it right."

Deland stated that to deny FDR's disability in the memorial is to set back efforts to assure acceptance of people with disabilities in American life. "42 million taxpayer dollars are funding the 7.5-acre FDR Memorial and to date, there is no plan to show his disability. We just don't understand why the Commission chooses to hide FDR's disability. This denies the historical reality that during the last twenty-four years of Roosevelt's life, he never took a step without his braces and the assistance of others. Indeed, during the 12 years of his presidency, he spent most of his waking hours in his wheelchair."

"Time is running out," said Deland, a wheelchair user, who over a year ago urged the FDR Memorial Commission to make the simple change. The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial is due to open in the spring of 1997, complete with 12-foot-high waterfalls and an amphitheater on the Tidal Basin near the Jefferson Memorial in Washington. Plans call for three statues of FDR and one of his wife Eleanor.

Support for the depiction of FDR's disability has come from many sources, most notably, from eight of his grandchildren. The Roosevelts said in a recent letter to Deland and Reich that the memorial should "display his disability today as an inspiration to others. ... He would wish to have the people of this country and the world understand his disability ... there is no better memorial than a complete picture of who he was."

Leading historians and biographers also have spoken out. "Depicting FDR in a wheelchair would be one of the most powerful parts of the memorial," said Pulitzer prize-winning author of FDR's biography *No Ordinary Time*, Doris Kearns Goodwin. "We all need to understand what it was this man conquered. If Franklin Roosevelt were to come back, I think he would want his disability to be shown in some way," she added.

"The FDR Memorial Commission claims FDR would wish to hide his disability," said Alan Reich. "If the Commission were to follow FDR's wishes, there would be no memorial at all. Since there will be a memorial, and we agree with this decision, it must reflect the wishes of present and future generations. They deserve to remember him as a man who led the world from his wheelchair."

Reich stated further, "FDR's triumph over his disability inspired people the world over to triumph over their adversity in the Great Depression and in World War II. His disability was central to his persona and to his leadership. Who would deny that the qualities so vital in FDR's leadership -- his courage, his determination, his compassion, and his spirit of optimism -- were forged in his successful struggle with disability? His comrade-in-arms, Winston Churchill, had it right when he told the House of Commons that Roosevelt's disability led to his 'becoming indisputable master of the scene.'"

Former President George Bush, who signed the historic Americans with Disabilities Act into law in 1990, stated, "... it would be a shame if at least one of the figures in the memorial did not show him as a man who had a disability. It is my opinion that FDR should be shown for what he was - à courageous man who had infantile paralysis and still led our nation."

An effort by the FDR Memorial Commission to raise additional money for the memorial from corporations and private sources is underway. With the help of anonymous donors, N.O.D. has contributed \$10,000 to the Commission's drive. "We want to put our money where our convictions are," Reich commented. "We are convinced that this simple improvement must be made, and we are willing to assist in any way possible to make sure our generation does not shirk our responsibilities to history, to our contemporaries with and without disabilities worldwide, and to future generations. Just as Roosevelt founded the 'March of Dimes' to conquer polio, we are prepared to launch a 'March of Dollars' to honor FDR and his triumph over adversity - to show him as he was," said Reich.

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STUDENTS ... FDR MEMORIAL SHOULD SHOW HIS DISABILITY

New Jersey Elementary School Donates \$300 to National Organization on Disability to Begin a "March of Dollars" Honoring FDR's Memory for Future Generations

"We got involved ... because we care about truth."

(Palisades Park, NJ - June 18) Truth about President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is what the students of Lindbergh Elementary School in Palisades Park, NJ want from President Clinton and Members of Congress.

They are concerned about the historical inaccuracy of the \$55 million monument now being erected on the Mall in Washington. Led by teacher Sherry Sabin, the school is donating \$300 to the National Organization on Disability to begin a "March of Dollars" to honor FDR, as he was, not as some adults think he should have been. The students want the FDR Memorial Commission, which controls the memorial, to modify their plan which does not show FDR's disability in any of the statues.

"Roosevelt's disability should not be covered up because memorials are supposed to teach us and to inspire us to do great things," said Allison Malik, a Lindbergh School sixth grader. She spoke during a morning school assembly at which the \$300 was presented to Alan A Reich, President of the National Organization on Disability that is leading the effort to have FDR's disability portrayed.

"President Roosevelt was and is an inspiration to Americans, in great part, because of his disability. He spent most of his working life in a wheelchair after contracting polio at age 39. FDR's disability shaped his character and the vital qualities of his leadership determination, courage, compassion and spirit of optimism," Reich said.

"It is curious that youngsters who will see and learn from the monument want the full picture, while adults in charge of making those decisions want to hide his disability." Reich continued. "And it will only take a small change in the huge seven-acre memorial to make the point."

"The students' comments at today's assembly say it best," said Reich.

Allison Malik, sixth grade

"I believe that the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial should show his disability because the Memorial should show how the person really looked and to remind people of the honored person's great leadership. Roosevelt's disability should not be covered up because memorials are supposed to teach us and to inspire us to do great things.

"...We can all learn from his example to overcome our own difficulties and to do whatever we want to do in the future despite what others think. If the monument does not show him in his wheelchair, we all lose part of the reason we admire him. He overcame a great physical handicap to teach us a great lesson: We have nothing to fear, but fear itself."

Steven Oh, sixth grade

"We got involved in this project because we care about truth ... A statue which doesn't show the way he was when he was President is not the best memorial for him. We explained how we felt about the FDR Monument in letters to the President, Senators and Congressmen and N.O.D.... We drew ideas of how the FDR Monument should look.

"I think we should be proud of ourselves for participating in this event ... We have been a voice for changing the way people think I think we have made a difference."

PRESIDENT SIGNS LAW AUTHORIZING ADDITION OF FDR IN A WHEELCHAIR TO NEW MEMORIAL

Washington, D.C. - President Clinton signed Senate Joint Resolution 29 authorizing an addition to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial on the Washington Mall that will portray the former president in a wheelchair.

The legislation, introduced in May, was sponsored by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), and was signed by the President on July 24", 1997. It directs the Secretary of Interior to make this addition.

The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.), for the last three years, has led the national effort to include a depiction of FDR's disability in the Memorial.

N.O.D. Chairman Michael R. Deland stated, "we are grateful to the Congress and President Clinton for their leadership in passing and signing this Joint Resolution. We also thank the many disability organizations and individuals across the country whose tireless efforts brought this victory. The legislation ensures that future generations of visitors will know that FDR led the United States through the Great Depression and WWII – from his wheelchair."

Currently, none of the nine statues and bas reliefs in the Memorial's 7.5-acre, open air park site show that President Roosevelt had a disability.

The legislation requires that the addition to the Memorial be funded by the private sector, at no expense to the government. N.O.D. has begun to raise the funds. N.O.D. President Alan A. Reich stated, "we are calling on the American people to help build this statue by contributing financially, just as FDR himself called on the American people to conquer polio through his "March of Dimes. After all, FDR's disability was central to his character and shaped his leadership. President Roosevelt was a hero for all mankind, and he deserves to be recognized by future generations for his many achievements, including his triumph over his disability."

"It is our hope that a statue of FDR in a wheelchair will be dedicated by President Clinton within two years", said James Dickson, N.O.D. Director of Community Affairs. "Every day that passes, thousands of visitors to the Memorial don't see that our 32" president was a great man who had a disability, and that he used a wheelchair each day of his four terms in the White House."

Donations, which are tax-deductible, should be sent to:

Riggs National Bank of Washington, D.C.

Attn: N.O.D. FDR Memorial Wheelchair Statue Fund, Dept 0571 Washington, DC 20073-0030

202-293-5960 TD 202 293-5968 fax 202 293-799 VVw.nod.org

NOD

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National Organization on Disability Joins Vice President Gore to Launch "Rendezvous with Destiny" Campaign First \$100K Pledged for New President Roosevelt Statue in Wheelchair

(Washington, DC - July 2, 1998) -- At the site of Washington's popular new memorial to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Vice President Al Gore joined the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) today to launch the "Rendezvous with Destiny" Campaign. The N.O.D.'s ambitious goal is to raise the funds needed to construct and place America's first and only statue of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his wheelchair.

The Campaign was announced today at an event called and keynoted by Vice President Al Gore and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. Representing N.O.D., which is leading the F.D.R. statue effort, were Campaign Co-chairman Michael Deland (Chairman, N.O.D.) and Christopher Roosevelt, a grandson of the late President. The Campaign's honorary Chairman is former President George Bush.

As part of its commitment to officially complete the F.D.R. Memorial, N.O.D. has pledged to raise \$1.5 million in funds to construct this unprecedented and historic new statue of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his wheelchair. The Campaign launch was marked by N.O.D.'s announcement of the first major gift of \$100,000 from Gordon and Llura Gund. Mr. Gund is a successful business leader, who is blind and active in blindness prevention programs.

Three years ago, N.O.D. initiated and spearheaded efforts to add a statue of F.D.R. in a wheelchair to the memorial, which has been visited by over two million people since its dedication in May 1997. Former Presidents Bush, Ford, and Carter along with Roosevelt family members joined thousands in the disability community in support of the effort. In July 1997, President Clinton signed legislation mandating this important addition to the memorial.

The Campaign's theme echoes President Roosevelt's calling to his own generation of Americans to a "rendezvous with destiny," inspiring all Americans to persevere through the Great Depression and win World War II. F.D.R. met his personal rendezvous with destiny beginning in 1921 when at age 39 he contracted polio; he never took another step unassisted. During his 12 years in the White House, he used a wheelchair every day.

Michael Deland called on a new generation of Americans to fulfill yet another "rendezvous with destiny," by completing the F.D.R. Memorial and adding a statue of F.D.R. in his wheelchair. "Fifty years from now schoolchildren will go through the memorial and know that F.D.R. turned his disability into a source of strength, first for himself, then for all people," remarked Deland. He added, "I am heartened by the vision to convey F.D.R.'s triumph over adversity as a symbol of what anyone, disabled or non-disabled can achieve."

In addition to raising funds, N.O.D. will continue to educate the public about F.D.R.'s leadership of the nation and the world from a wheelchair.

"Ignoring F.D.R.'s disability in the memorial missed a central part of my grandfather's identity," said Christopher Roosevelt, the former President's grandson. "His battle with polio helped forge his leadership qualities of determination, compassion, patience and courage."

Alan A. Reich, President, N.O.D., stated, "We commend Congress, President Clinton, Vice President Gore and Secretary Babbitt for their vision and leadership. We are grateful to the Roosevelt family for their

spirited commitment. Most importantly, we thank the many thousands of people, with and without disabilities, all across America for their forceful and effective advocacy leading to today's victory celebration. This is democracy at its best!"

The National Organization on Disability promotes the full and equal participation of America's 54 million men, women, and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. Founded in 1982, N.O.D. is the only national network organization concerned with all disabilities, all age groups, and all disability issues. N.O.D. receives no government funds and is supported entirely by private donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. For more information, please contact N.O.D. at (202) 293-5960, TDD (202) 293-5968 or visit them on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nod.org>

Editor's Note: Electronic and glossy photo images of F.D.R. in a wheelchair are available by request.

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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.

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.

Letterhead Sidebar:

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