



Rendezvous with Destiny Campaign

FDR Wheelchair Statue Fund
910 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

*Completing the FDR Memorial by adding a statue of
President Roosevelt in his wheelchair*

Celebrating FDR's source of strength – his disability

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FDR's Triumph over Adversity

"Franklin's illness gave him strength and courage he had not had before" - Eleanor Roosevelt

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt challenged his generation of Americans to a "rendezvous with destiny", inspiring them to persevere through the Great Depression and World War II. FDR had his own "rendezvous with destiny" beginning in 1921 when, at age 39, he contracted polio. He never took another step unassisted and used a wheelchair every day.

FDR often kept his disability out of the public eye as a reaction to the negative attitudes toward people with disabilities at that time. However, there were times when FDR fully revealed his disability. He remained in his wheelchair while touring hospitals full of Americans wounded in battle in World War II and when addressing the Howard University student body (a group also facing formidable barriers).

FDR gave most of his personal wealth to create the Warm Springs Rehabilitation Center in Georgia, which continues to attract many tourists each year. FDR visited Warm Springs regularly throughout his presidency, exercising with and encouraging the patients as they pursued their rehabilitation. Patients at Warm Springs were so moved by his interest and help that they referred to him as "Dr. Roosevelt." FDR developed a system both to measure the strength of muscles and to determine how to use that strength most effectively. This muscle strength chart is displayed in FDR's Warm Springs cottage, "The Little White House".

FDR's disability experience was profound. It challenged him to fight the odds and to triumph over adversity. Out of his experience with disability came his leadership qualities: strength, courage, determination and compassion. He inspired people throughout the world—disabled and non-disabled alike—to triumph over their own adversity.

As President, he called on the nation; itself paralyzed by depression, to overcome grave difficulties. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he counseled a country of weary and hungry people. As a world leader he led our nation out of the Great Depression, commanded the mightiest fighting force in history to victory in World War II, and established the United Nations.

Moreover, he did it all from his wheelchair!

Legislation Guarantees Depiction of FDR in a Wheelchair

*"Depicting FDR in a wheelchair would be one of the most powerful parts of the memorial." - Doris Kearns Goodwin,
Pulitzer Prize winning author of FDR's biography *No Ordinary Time**

President Roosevelt's great achievements are honored in the 7.5 acre memorial park, dedicated on May 2, 1997, located between the Tidal Basin and the Potomac River and between the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials in Washington, DC. The FDR Memorial consists of four open-air rooms that house nine statues and bas-reliefs. There are two representations of President Roosevelt in the Memorial. One is a bas-relief of FDR's first inaugural motorcade and the other is a statue of FDR seated wearing a long cape.

However, the Memorial is not complete without a depiction of FDR in his wheelchair. It misses a central aspect of FDR's leadership—his triumph over disability. A Louis Harris & Associates survey revealed that 73% of the American public support showing FDR's disability in the Memorial. The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) began to rectify this situation in 1995 when it launched a campaign to add a statue depicting FDR in his wheelchair to the Memorial.

A week before the Memorial was dedicated, President Clinton called on Senator Daniel Inouye, Co-Chairman of the FDR Memorial Commission, to introduce legislation requiring a depiction of FDR in a wheelchair to be added to the Memorial. President Clinton signed the legislation into law in July 1997. The act calls for the Secretary of Interior to "plan for the design and construction of an addition of a permanent statue, bas-relief, or other similar structure to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC to provide recognition of the fact that President Roosevelt's leadership in the struggle by the United States for peace, well-being, and human dignity was provided while the President used a wheelchair."

The statue of FDR in a wheelchair will be prominently placed at the entrance to the Memorial. The sculptor selected for the project is Robert Graham who designed the Social Programs Mural and the Inaugural Motorcade at the existing FDR Memorial. N.O.D. is closely monitoring each stage of this process and will work to ensure that the depiction of our former President in his wheelchair will be one that captures FDR's spirit of optimism, his indefatigable determination, and his courageous leadership.

"It would be a disservice to history and the public's interest if the impact of polio on the man were to be hidden."

- Grandchildren of FDR

N.O.D. Leads the Fundraising Effort

"I think it unconscionable for schoolchildren to go through the memorial and not know FDR used a wheelchair."

- Michael R. Deland, Chairman, N.O.D.

The act calls for funds for the new depiction of FDR to be raised in the private sector. The National Organization on Disability is proud to lead this effort.