

NATIONAL

Roosevelt monument to include wheelchair

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WASHINGTON TIMES

July 6-12, 1998

Franklin D Roosevelt, who never used a wheelchair in public and always insisted on being photographed with his disability hidden, will get one in the 7½-acre memorial dedicated to him last year in West Potomac park.

Vice president Al Gore on July 2 announced the addition of the statue of a wheelchair bound, casually clad Roosevelt at the entrance to the memorial.

When the memorial was opened 14 months ago, groups supporting the disabled loudly protested though that a wheelchair wasn't included in either of the sites two sculptures of FDR, who was paralyzed from the waist down by polio, which struck in 1921, when he was 39.

Critics of the wheelchair edition include Roosevelt's grandson, Curtis Dall Roosevelt, who said it wrongly portrayed a man who persistently and successfully hid his paralysis from the public. Mr. Roosevelt said his grandfather would not have approved of being shown in a wheelchair. Roosevelt rarely used wheelchair and instead sat in chairs or cars or was escorted from place to place with the help of sturdy leg braces, a cane and often his son's arm.

Nevertheless, a 1995 nationwide poll showed that 73 percent of the respondents believed the disability should be depicted anyway. President Clinton agreed and submitted legislation calling for the addition to the memorial.

"This is going to be the icon of the disabilities rights movement, and it is going to be unique," said Hugh Gregory Gallagher, an activist for the disabled and member of the committee that reviewed and approved the design concept for the addition in May. Mr. Gallagher was paralyzed from the waist down by polio in 1952.

"The concept of the addition is that this is the person, the man, the individual. And then you move on into the memorial and see the achievement of this man: the four terms, the statue larger than life." he said.

Robert Graham, one of the memorials five original artists, won the commission to sculpt the statue and the wall behind it. The addition will depict a life-size Roosevelt in a sweater, sitting in his wheelchair in front of a wall of bas-relief statues.

The National Organization on Disability will pay for the \$1.5 million addition and already has begun raising funds.

The \$48 million memorial's larger than life bronze sculpture of Roosevelt seated in a chair, his legs concealed by a cloth wrap, irked many in the disability community, some of whom lobbied

unsuccessfully to alter the design before the monument opened so that he would appear in a wheelchair.

President Clinton has said he wants the addition to be completed before his second term ends.

The FDR memorial opened May 2 1997: the National Park Service says it is among the mall's most popular sites.