

1920-1988

SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TIMELINE OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

1920: THE SMITH-FESS ACT

Also known as the Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act, this law established a federal program to provide vocational assistance to Americans with physical disabilities.

1935: SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

In addition to developing a system of benefits for the elderly, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security of 1935 into law, providing benefits for the blind and the physically disabled.

1945: FIRST CURB CUTS

In 1945, Battle Creek, Michigan, installed accessible curb cuts becoming the nation's first city to help facilitate travel for those with limited mobility.

1959: EDWARD ROBERTS DENIED A DIPLOMA

In 1959, Ed Roberts, who had quadriplegia due to childhood polio, was denied a high school diploma because he had not completed his physical education and driver's training requirements. Roberts successfully advocated for his right to receive a high school diploma and went on to the University of California, Berkeley and continued disability advocacy work. Today, Roberts is known as the "Father of the Disability Rights Movement."

1973: THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

Prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by or funded by Federal agencies.

1974: THE END OF UGLY LAWS

In 1974, the last of the "Ugly Laws" was eliminated. "Ugly Laws" had allowed the police to arrest and jail people with visible disabilities for being seen in public.

1975: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Requires a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment for all children with disabilities.

1977: THE 504 SIT-IN

The 504 sit-in demonstrations began on April 5, 1977, demanding that the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (or HEW) sign off on regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, so the Act could be enforced. As a result of the 504 sit-ins, the Secretary of HEW signed the 504 regulations on April 28, 1977.

1983: AMERICAN DISABLED FOR ATTENDANT PROGRAMS (ADAPT)

American Disabled for Attendant Programs (ADAPT) was formed in 1983. ADAPT is a grassroots United States disability rights organization with chapters in 30 states. ADAPT members played a key role in advocacy for the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

1988: DEAF PRESIDENT NOW

In March of 1988, Gallaudet University, a school for Deaf people in Washington, D.C., named I. King Jordan as the first Deaf president of Gallaudet.

1988: FAIR HOUSING ACT

The Fair Housing Act was amended to include prohibiting discrimination towards those with disabilities and families with children concerning housing.