



## Senate Passes the ADA Amendments Act

Feature Story from civilrights.org

Tyler Lewis

September 11, 2008

On September 11, the U.S. Senate passed the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 on a voice vote, restoring Congress' original intent to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

"Today's Senate passage of the ADA Amendments Act gives the nation a glimpse of the legislative process at its highest and best. No narrow partisan politics barred the way to reinstating a vulnerable class of people with disabilities who had been excluded by narrow court decisions from the law's protections – such as those with diabetes, cancer and bipolar disorder," said Nancy Zirkin, executive vice president of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, in a statement.

The bill will overturn Supreme Court decisions that have reduced protections for certain people with disabilities – including people with diabetes, epilepsy, heart disease, mental disabilities, and cancer – who were originally intended to be covered by the ADA. The ADA prohibits discrimination against Americans with physical and mental disabilities in such areas as employment, public accommodations, and transportation.

"This vote demonstrates the broad-based bipartisan support for the need to restore protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to people with epilepsy, depression, diabetes, cancer and a host of other conditions who have been interpreted out of the ADA by a callous majority of the U.S. Supreme Court," said Andrew Imparato, president and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities, in a joint statement.

In an unprecedented show of cooperation, disability rights, civil rights, and employer groups worked together to propose language that eventually became part of the bill, which made it easier for both chambers to vote on the bill quickly. The House passed its version of the bill overwhelmingly (402-17) on June 25.

"After many months of negotiation, the legislation represents a sound compromise between the Senate, the House, the business community, and the disability community. We urge that it be enacted quickly and signed into law," said Randel K. Johnson, vice president of labor, immigration, and employee benefits of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law in the coming weeks.

### Related Links

- [More on the ADA](#)