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September 20, 2007

VIA E-MAIL

Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Orrin:

I am writing to you today to request your support on an issue of personal importance to me. I am asking that you co-sponsor the ADA Restoration Act; S.1881 in the Senate or H.R. 3195 in the House of Representatives.

When I served as Attorney General of the United States under President George H.W. Bush, one of my proudest achievements was working on passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). As parents of a child with a disability, both my wife and I fully understand the importance of the ADA to the millions of people with disabilities and their families. The ADA – which sets as its goals equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities – is one of the most significant pieces of civil rights legislation in the past twenty-five years and has changed the lives of millions of Americans with disabilities.

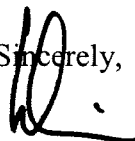
Despite this progress, the ADA has not been as effective as intended in protecting some individuals with disabilities from employment discrimination. Under a series of court decisions, the definition of who qualifies as an “individual with a disability” has become so restrictive and difficult to prove that millions of people we intended to protect from discrimination – including people with epilepsy, diabetes and cancer – are no longer covered by the law’s protections. In addition, in many instances these individuals are caught in a bizarre and unintended Catch-22. If they are taking their medication or using other measures to mitigate the impact of their disability, they are no longer deemed “disabled” under the ADA, even if their symptoms could return as soon as their medication stopped. In such cases, their requests for reasonable accommodations at work can be denied or they can be fired without recourse – even if it is based on their disability!

In response to this untenable situation, Senators Tom Harkin and Arlen Specter and Representatives Steny Hoyer and James Sensenbrenner have introduced the ADA Restoration Act of 2007 in the Senate and House, respectively. These bills have the goal of restoring Congress’s original intent in creating strong prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of disability.

I ask for your support in not only co-sponsoring either S.1881 or H.R. 3195, but also in facilitating its movement through your Committee and getting it to the floor as soon as possible.

I look forward to working with you on this important legislation for millions of Americans with disabilities.

Sincerely,



Dick Thornburgh