

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
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ON AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AT 20
CELEBRATING OUR PROGRESS, AFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT

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Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify today to share my experiences as a wounded warrior that continues to serve on Active Duty. I am appearing today in my personal capacity. Although I am on active duty with the U.S. Army, my testimony here today represents my personal views and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Army, the Department of Defense or the Administration.

I was commissioned in 1989 from the United States Military Academy, where I was a four-year letterman in football. I continued to live an active lifestyle while serving in the United States Army, enjoying soccer, scuba diving, hiking and camping.

I have been on active duty for over 20 years, serving in various command and staff positions. I have served in every major conflict of the last two decades, including Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (Kuwait), Operation Joint Forge (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), where I commanded a battalion as part of the surge to secure Baghdad in 2007.

In May 2007, I was severely wounded by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). As a result of those wounds, I lost both legs above the knees and sustained severe damage to my right arm. As you can imagine, my life was turned upside down. Admittedly, previous to being wounded, I was not aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But since then, I have learned a great deal and appreciate its value to our society.

I have been fortunate to travel overseas and am repeatedly struck by the fact that, unlike the United States, foreign countries do not always consider disabled accessibility a priority. In fact, in some parts of the world, accessibility is not even a consideration. I understand how fortunate I am to live in a country where accessibility is not only the law, but it is embraced.

In terms of the uniformed services' day-to-day missions and functions, adherence to the ADA is not required. However, with the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom, the Army has begun accommodating the changing face of its force. The Army has developed and expanded existing policies allowing seriously wounded Soldiers to continue to serve on active duty. From my perspective, Army leadership embraces the spirit and intent of the ADA. I am a testament

that Army leadership understands those who are severely wounded can still make valuable contributions through continued service in uniform to our Nation. Not only have we been allowed to continue to serve, but we have been given the opportunity to flourish, grow and reach our potential.

During the second year of my recovery, I attended and graduated from Georgetown University, earning a Master's degree in Policy Management. This past June, I completed my War College Fellowship at the Institute of World Politics in Washington, DC. Last October, I was selected for promotion to Colonel and this past March, I was selected as an alternate for brigade command. My point is not to highlight any of my accomplishments, but to show there is opportunity regardless of your circumstances.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight the Army's efforts with respect to accessibility. I am proud to say that I live in an ADA-compliant home, recently built at Fort Belvoir.

Additionally, all newly-constructed Warrior in Transition complexes are ADA-compliant.

On July 13, 2010, I assumed the duties of Director, Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2). The U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program assists the Army's most severely wounded, ill and injured

soldiers and their families. AW2 facilitates their transition back into full time service or productive civilian life. We accomplish this mission by delivering compassionate, tailored, and personal support to our wounded Warriors; educate others on the program; design, integrate, leverage, and influence relevant policy and programs to ensure that severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families are supported for as long as it takes.

The U.S. Army, through AW2, has leveraged the goodwill of the American people, including the tremendous support from various veterans service organizations and charities. I look forward to the opportunity to continue my service to our Army and our Nation by leading AW2 and assisting our Soldiers and their families.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and I stand ready to address any questions you may have.