

Disability Pride Month

35 Years After the Capitol Crawl

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Before 1990, people with disabilities in the U.S. & New York City faced daily barriers to access and inclusion.



Most public buildings had no ramps, elevators, or accessible bathrooms



Buses had no lifts



Sidewalks often lacked curb cuts



Employers could legally deny jobs to people with disabilities

By 1990, around 43 million Americans had a disability, yet they were often excluded from political conversations and daily life.

Inaccessibility was the norm, and the law allowed it.

On March 12, 1990, over 1,000 disability rights activists gathered at the U.S. Capitol. About 60 left their wheelchairs and crawled up all 83 steps.

“I’ll take all night if I have to.”

- Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins, age 8

The protest was led by Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (ADAPT), a grassroots group fighting for disability rights and accessible transit. **Their message was clear: access is a right, not a privilege.**



On July 26, 1990, just four months after the Capitol Crawl, President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law.

For the first time, more than **61 million adults** in the United States, or about **1 in 4**, were legally protected from discrimination based on disability.

The law requires equal access to:

- Jobs and workplaces
- Public schools and education
- Transportation
- Government programs and buildings
- Businesses and public spaces
- Digital and communication platforms



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people with a wide range of disabilities, including:

- **Physical** (mobility limitations, paralysis)
- **Sensory** (blindness, low vision, deafness)
- **Cognitive & developmental** (autism, intellectual disabilities)
- **Learning** (dyslexia, ADHD)
- **Mental health** (depression, anxiety, PTSD)

The ADA requires access in four key areas:

- **Employment:** Accommodations like assistive tech or flexible hours
- **Public spaces:** Barrier-free businesses and venues
- **Public services:** Accessible government buildings and libraries
- **Communication:** Captions, screen readers, and keyboard-friendly websites

Over the past 35 years, New York City has made progress.

8,100+

Curb ramps
installed
in NYC

3,400+

Accessible
pedestrian
signals added

But many challenges persist:

30%

of subway
stations are
wheelchair-
accessible

70%

of NYC public
schools are not
fully accessible

Frequent subway elevator outages and inaccessible digital services continue to limit full access.

Change happens when we speak up, just like they did in 1990.

✓ Learn how recent laws impact your rights and access.

✉ Act by contacting your representatives and sharing your story.

🤝 Support organizations advancing inclusion and disability justice.

As we celebrate Disability Pride Month,
**let's keep pushing for a future where
access is guaranteed, not requested.**