

# Commission to Study a Potential National Museum of Disability History and Culture Act

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 1 in 4 adults in the United States – 61 million people—report living with a disability. Disability impacts all Americans and is an essential and natural component of life in the United States. The history of Americans with disabilities is as old as the history of our country, and the disability rights movement has been fighting for equal rights for people with disabilities since the 1800s. Despite this, there is no national museum dedicated to disability history and culture.

The Smithsonian Institution, founded in 1846, is a museum, education, and research complex dedicated to increasing and sharing knowledge. Its museums house art collections and important historical artifacts and tell the stories of specific segments of the American population through the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the emerging National Museum of the American Latino and Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.

A national museum of disability history and culture would uplift the stories of Americans with disabilities by collecting and preserving artifacts, firsthand accounts, media, and more, and would educate the public about the historical challenges, landmark legislation and judicial rulings, and technological advancements impacting the disability community in the United States. The museum would showcase the lived experiences and history of people with disabilities and illustrate the tenacity of a country that strives to improve the lives of everyone.

The *Commission to Study a Potential National Museum of Disability History and Culture Act* would create a commission to study the potential creation of a new national museum of disability history and culture, a necessary first step toward creating a new museum within the Smithsonian Institution. Specifically:

- The commission would consist of 23 members, with seven members appointed by the President, and four members appointed by the majority and minority leaders of each chamber of Congress. A majority of the commissioners would be people with disabilities.
- The commission would have two years to hold a national conference and write a report to the President and Congress with recommendations on whether a new museum of disability history and culture should be created within the Smithsonian Institution. The report will detail the existing museums and collections in the United States dedicated to the history and culture of people with disabilities. The report would also outline the mission and purpose of the proposed museum. The report will include an estimate of the cost of constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed museum, plans for supporting the museum with donations from the public, and suggestions for the museum's location and name.
- The bill would authorize \$5.3 million in funding for the commission to perform this work.