

Sample Policy Speech: Making Campus Accessible for Disabled Students

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1 I'd like to ask you to use your imaginations and think how it would feel if you'd spent an evening studying for an exam. You get up in the morning all set to go to classes, you go down, you get to your door, and it won't open. You think, "Oh, I can just use my back door." But you go to your back door, and that won't open either.

2 It would be pretty frustrating, wouldn't it? That's the kind of frustration handicapped students feel when they can't get to class because of the snow. And that's the same kind of frustration I found when I tried to get my scooter through the snow and it short-circuited because it got so wet from the snow.

3 Now there are many reasons that campuses could be inaccessible, but what I would like to address today is the inaccessibility of this campus due to the uncleared snow. You may think, "This is never going to affect me," but sadly it could. By accident or illness, it could become a problem for you.

4 As you can see, I use a scooter to get around campus, and I have found that this campus is inaccessible due to the uncleared snow. I'd like to share that problem with you and then share my solution. Let's start with the problem.

5 As I see it, the problem faced by handicapped students has two components: the uncleared snow and the violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The first component is the inaccessibility of this campus due to the uncleared snow that creates a barrier for wheelchairs and scooters to pass through. Here in Wisconsin, we get an average of 43 inches of snow in any winter and an average of thirteen days of snowfall over one inch or more. As you can see, that would create a significant barrier for those of us who have to use scooters or wheelchairs to get around.

6 A fellow handicapped student shared his story with me. He is a quadriplegic; he has no use of his arms or his legs. He directs his scooter with a wand by his chin. He tried to get through the snow this winter, and he tipped over and was hurt. This is unfair, and it's dangerous. Why should he have to jeopardize his life just to try to get to class? And why is it fair for him to be kept out of class when he has paid for classes out of his pocket just like you and just like me? I've heard the same kinds of horror stories from several handicapped students. The fact remains that the snow creates a barrier that we just cannot pass through, and that barrier really creates a significant problem for us.

7 The second component of this problem is that the Americans with Disabilities Act, a civil rights act that was passed by Congress and signed by President Bush in 1990, prohibits discrimination and requires that barrier-free access to any public accommodation