



March 8, 2012

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schakowsky:

On behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), I want to thank you for once again sponsoring the Inclusive Home Design Act. As you may know, PVA is the only Congressionally-chartered veterans' service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. As such, PVA has been a long-time champion of efforts to enhance housing accessibility to promote greater integration of people with disabilities into their communities.

We are pleased that your bill seeks to address one of the remaining major housing barriers faced by individuals with physical disabilities and mobility impairments. While the Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require accessibility features in multifamily housing, both privately and publicly-funded, neither of these laws apply to the millions of single-family homes and townhomes built in this country.

This legislation will reduce the isolation felt by many people with disabilities barred from visiting friends, family and coworkers who live in single family houses and townhouses. The inclusion of basic architectural accessibility features in such dwellings will also alleviate the need for people to leave their homes when they acquire a disability.

Your measure will be especially important for thousands of veterans returning from military service with life-altering disabilities. While they are fortunate to have access to home modification grants through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the IHDA will help extend the value of those grants by alleviating the need for these veterans to spend their money on ramps, widening doorways and other features covered by your bill.

Dozens of communities around this country have adopted so-called "visitability" requirements in their building ordinances. It is time that this movement receives the attention at the federal level that it deserves. PVA commends you for making this effort and looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of the Inclusive Home Design Act.

Sincerely,

Douglas K. Vollmer
Associate Executive Director