

Could We Pass the ADA Today? Disability Rights in an Age of Partisan Polarization

Disability rights advocates have long been willing to cross the aisle. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 stands out as a model of bipartisan law-making. Reagan appointees in the National Council on Disability helped draft the legislation. A Republican senator and a Democratic congressman first sponsored the bill. It passed the Democratic-controlled Senate and House of Representatives by high margins—78 to 8 and 377 to 28 respectively—before being signed into law by a Republican president.

Early signs seem to indicate that this degree of bipartisan support for disability rights may be eroding in the Trump era. Proposed legislation like the American Health Care Act (“TrumpCare”) and the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 threaten to roll back the legal protections for people with disabilities. Has America’s longstanding history of bipartisan disability rights finally come to an end? This panel will explore whether the ADA could pass in the current polarized political climate. It also looks to the future asking how we might build consensus across parties to further not only disability rights but also civil rights generally.

We encourage academics from a broad range of backgrounds including disability law, election law, political theory, legislation, and civil rights law to submit proposals for consideration. Please email your abstract to Jessica L. Roberts at jrobert6@central.uh.edu by **Friday, August 25**.