

2008 -- S 3081

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2008

SENATE RESOLUTION

**PROCLAIMING THE THIRD WEEK OF OCTOBER "DISABILITY HISTORY WEEK" IN
THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

Introduced By: Senator Daniel J. Issa

Date Introduced: June 05, 2008

Referred To: Senate Constitutional & Regulatory Issues

1 WHEREAS, On July 26, 2008, Americans will celebrate the 18th Anniversary of the
2 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and

3 WHEREAS, Since the ADA was enacted into law in 1990, many changes have been
4 made, creating a more accessible environment for America's approximately 51.2 million people
5 with disabilities; and

6 WHEREAS, There are almost 195,000 persons with disabilities living in Rhode Island,
7 according to the 2002 Census of Population and Housing; and

8 WHEREAS, This number qualifies persons with disabilities as Rhode Island's largest
9 minority group; and

10 WHEREAS, The month of October is also National Disability Employment Awareness
11 Month. This annual observance, designed to recognize the contributions of workers with
12 disabilities, began in 1988 with the Presidential Proclamation of Public Law 100-630 (Title III,
13 Sec 301a). This law replaced "National Employ the Handicapped Week," which had been
14 celebrated annually since 1945 during the first week in October; and

15 WHEREAS, Public attitudes continue to stigmatize people with disabilities as being less
16 capable than those without disabilities; and

17 WHEREAS, Many people with disabilities feel that stigma and therefore are not
18 comfortable talking about their disability; and

19 WHEREAS, Attitudes are formed at a young age. It is important that our youth

1 understand history in order to appreciate how individuals with disabilities were once viewed and
2 treated. During Disability History Week, students will be provided with the opportunity to learn
3 how people with disabilities were instrumental in changing history, and how they became active
4 participants in changing societal attitudes about their needs, desires and capabilities. By teaching
5 disability history in schools, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that history is not
6 repeated and that there continues to be movement towards an even more accessible society in
7 future generations; and

8 WHEREAS, The museum of Disability History is developing a school curriculum
9 focusing on disability history; and

10 WHEREAS, The curriculum in many Rhode Island schools includes information about
11 the civil rights movement and women's rights movement, exposing students to the
12 accomplishments of other minority groups; and

13 WHEREAS, Individuals with disabilities have achieved similar victories as a result of the
14 disability rights movement; and

15 WHEREAS, Many famous people, including Ludwig von Beethoven, Harriet Tubman,
16 Alexander Graham Bell, Helen Keller, Francisco Goya, Leonardo Da Vinci, Sammy Davis Jr.,
17 Wilma Mankiller and Franklin Delano Roosevelt have been people with disabilities; and

18 WHEREAS, Students are not typically exposed to the disability rights movement, and
19 many Rhode Island teachers believe that their students should learn about the history and
20 accomplishments of individuals with disabilities; and

21 WHEREAS, Rhode Islanders with disabilities are eager to share their history and
22 accomplishments with young people; and

23 WHEREAS, Such education will improve public attitudes toward individuals with
24 disabilities for generations to come; now, therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
26 hereby proclaims the third week in October, 2008 as Disability History Week in Rhode Island;
27 and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Rhode Island Department of Education is requested to encourage
29 schools to conduct disability awareness activities during this week and to work with Rhode Island
30 disability organizations to develop and disseminate a list of curriculum resources and presenters
31 to assist schools in carrying out these activities; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
2 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living
3 Council and the Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disabilities.

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