

MEDIA ALERT

**LOYOLA'S COELHO CENTER FOUNDER TONY COELHO STATEMENT
ABOUT FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH'S PASSING**

As a driving force behind the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Coelho worked closely with then-President Bush to pass the groundbreaking legislation

LOS ANGELES – Loyola Law School, Los Angeles' **The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy & Innovation** founder and former U.S. Congressman Tony Coelho has been a key advocate for those with disabilities over the span of his career. As a driving force behind the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, Coelho worked closely with then-President George H.W. Bush to pass the groundbreaking legislation.

Coelho today released the following statement:

"Former President George H.W. Bush was one of the greatest men I ever knew. He was a great leader and humble public servant. He demonstrated true leadership in fighting for and signing into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – a crucial piece of legislation in the last thirty years, and one of his greatest legacies.

Now, 28 years later, people have forgotten how truly groundbreaking and controversial the ADA was at the time. But, back then, President Bush knew well the historic significance of his actions. I remember his words:

'Last year, we celebrated a victory of international freedom. Even the strongest person couldn't scale the Berlin Wall to gain the elusive promise of independence that lay just beyond. And so, together we rejoiced when that barrier fell.

Now I sign legislation, which takes a sledgehammer to another wall, one that has for too many generations separated Americans with disabilities from the freedom they could glimpse, but not grasp. Once again, we rejoice as this barrier falls, for claiming together we will not accept, we will not excuse, we will not tolerate discrimination in America.'

On that day, President Bush spoke of 'a coalition in the finest spirit—a joining of Democrats and Republicans' in working together to craft the ADA. And he recognized the effort's global impact: 'This historic act is the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities – the first. Its passage has made the United States the international leader on this human rights issue.'

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Passing the ADA was not without controversy. There were powerful forces opposed to the ADA. I asked the President directly about the significant opposition he was facing. His response to me was simple and direct: “This is of personal interest to me and what you’ve done is what I want.” His final words, right before signing the ADA, sum up his conviction: ‘Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.’

May God Bless President George H.W. Bush for taking a sledgehammer to the shameful wall of exclusion by signing the Americans with Disabilities Act – his greatest accomplishment. And, may President Bush rest in peace. His greatest legacy, the ADA, lives on. He was my hero and I will miss him as a friend.”

About The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy & Innovation

The Coelho Center, housed at Loyola Law School, Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), pursues a unique three-pronged mission: convening thought leaders to pursue positive change on disability issues; leveraging technology to advance the lives of people with disabilities; and creating a pipeline of lawyers with disabilities to populate the bench and hold elected office. The Coelho Center also ~~will~~draws on multiple areas of expertise from other LMU colleges. Founded by former congressman, disability rights icon and LMU alumnus Hon. Tony Coelho (LMU '64), The Coelho Center is the only organization of its kind at a Catholic university in America and the only one housed at a top U.S. law school. Details about The Coelho Center are available at www.lls.edu/coelhocenter.

About Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

Located on an award-winning Frank Gehry-designed campus in downtown Los Angeles, Loyola Law School is home to prominent faculty, dedicated students and cutting-edge programs. The Law School strives to instill in students the knowledge they need to excel on their chosen paths. It dedicates itself to preparing students for the rigors of practice with an extensive portfolio of practical-training opportunities, an 18,000-strong alumni network and a focus on social justice. Learn more at www.lls.edu.

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MEDIA: Tony Coelho is available for phone-in interviews to discuss President George H.W. Bush’s legacy with regard to the ADA.

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