WASHINGTON, DC -Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) praised final Congressional approval of legislation he authored to restore protections for citizens with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The legislation - the ADA Amendments Act - was necessary in light of court decisions that have eroded the ADA's original intent and shut out millions from its protections. Rep. Hoyer held a press conference yesterday on Capitol Hill after the House unanimously approved the legislation.

"The ADA made clear that a disability need not be disabling, and allowed millions of Americans with disabilities to take advantage of all the opportunity this country has to offer. It was a tremendous stride toward equality," **stated Rep. Hoyer, the lead Democratic sponsor of the original ADA** . "However, in a series of narrow-and in my view, mistaken-rulings, the courts have chipped away at our original intent, bit by bit. By passing this bill, we have brought millions of our fellow-citizens, who were previously shut out, back where they belong: under the ADA's protection."

Eighteen years ago, Congress passed and the first President Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act. Since becoming law, the ADA has allowed tens of millions of Americans with disabilities to enjoy rights many take for granted: the right to use the same streets, theaters, restrooms, or offices; and the right to prove themselves in the workplace, to succeed on their talent and drive alone.

However, in interpreting the law over those 18 years, the courts have consistently chipped away at Congress's clear intent with a series of narrow court rulings that have had the effect of excluding millions of Americans from the law's protection, including those who have mitigated the symptoms of their physical and mental impairments.

The ADA Amendments Act reasserts the original intent of the ADA law and clarifies the definition of a disability as a physical or mental impairment that "substantially limits" activities. The measure also broadens the number of activities covered under the law and expands the ability of workers to seek legal redress if they believe they are discriminated against.

"In the ADA, we said we wanted broad coverage for people with disabilities and those regarded as disabled," **stated Rep. Hoyer.** "We never expected that people with disabilities who worked to mitigate their conditions would have their efforts held against them, judging them no longer disabled enough to suffer discrimination.

"With this bill's passage, we reassert that intent and reclaim the ADA's promise, with a definition of ‘disability' that will be construed fairly and broadly," Rep. Hoyer said at the press conference. "After passing the House and the Senate overwhelmingly, the ADA amendments act heads to the President's desk, where I trust he will sign it."

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