

November 7, 2006

Epilepsy Foundation Commends U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee,
Constitution Subcommittee on ADA Oversight Hearing

The Epilepsy Foundation, the national voluntary agency solely dedicated to the welfare of the 2.7 million people with epilepsy in the U.S. and their families, commends the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary for holding an important oversight hearing on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Foundation also commends the leadership and vision of Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-WI) and Ranking Member John Conyers (D-MI) as well as that of Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH), Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Ranking Member. Additionally, the Foundation recognizes the incredible commitment and leadership of Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) who ably made the ADA a reality and has been a champion of the law and all those it serves for the past 16 years.

The Epilepsy Foundation believes that today's hearing is an excellent opportunity to highlight not only what has worked well over the past 16 years of the ADA, but to also shed light on the challenges still faced by many people with disabilities, particularly those with epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, bipolar disorder and diabetes. For many of these individuals, their rights under the ADA have been dramatically diminished due to interpretations of the courts that do not view people with these conditions as having a disability. Under the current definition, many of these people are considered "too functional" to be regarded as having a disability.

"The federal courts, relying upon the Supreme Court's failure to carry out Congressional intent, misapplication and misunderstanding of the ADA in employment have so narrowly construed the ADA as to have effectively written people like me out of our own bill," said the Hon. Tony Coelho, former Member of Congress and original author of the ADA speaking as a person with epilepsy as a witness for the majority. "It's time to restore the promise of the ADA that Congress intended."

"Restoration of the ADA is a top priority for the Epilepsy Foundation," said Eric R. Hargis, president and CEO of the Foundation. "We welcome the opportunity to work in a bipartisan manner with Congress to restore everyone's rights to compete for jobs based on their ability to perform the job – not based on whether or not they really meet the definition of disability. This is critical for people with epilepsy who want to work and deserve their right to be fully included in the American workforce."

The Epilepsy Foundation is part of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), the nation's leading coalition of national disability organizations.