

WASHINGTON, DC (May 16, 2012) – Today, Rep. Jan Schakowsky and eight House colleagues introduced **H.R. 5781**, the Inclusive Home Design Act, to expand the number of homes that are accessible for people with disabilities. People with mobility impairments have limited access to most homes because there are currently no federal standards for accessibility features in homes built with federal assistance.

“Universal standards for homes built with federal money are long past due, which is why I have introduced the Inclusive Home Design Act,” **said Rep. Schakowsky**. “The odds that any given home will have a disabled person living in it or visiting it at some point are extremely high, due to individuals experiencing permanent disability, temporary injury, or seniors who wish to stay at home as they age. Implementing accessible features when homes are built is a simple matter of fairness, cost effectiveness, and common sense.”

It is estimated that 70 percent of Americans will at some point in their life experience a disability that makes climbing stairs impossible.

Today, 95 percent of new single-family homes and townhouses built with federal assistance fail to include any features that make it possible for people with mobility impairments to live in or visit the homes. The Inclusive Home Design Act aims to increase the residence and accessibility options available to mobility-impaired individuals by employing “visitability” standards.

Specifically, the Inclusive Home Design Act would require that all newly-built single-family homes and townhouses receiving federal funds meet four specific standards:

- Include at least one accessible (“zero step”) entrance into the home
- Ensure all doorways on the main floor have a minimum of 32 inches of clear passage space
- Build at least one wheelchair accessible bathroom on the main floor
- Place electrical and climate controls (such as light switches and thermostats) at heights reachable from a wheelchair

The legislation applies to new construction, not renovations of existing homes. The average

added cost per home for the required features run from less than \$100 (for homes built on a concrete slab) to about \$600 (for homes with a basement or crawl space). Residents who develop disabilities or face age-related mobility problems often face much more expensive renovations or are forced out of their homes altogether.

“It makes no sense to build new homes that block people out when it is incredibly easy and cost effective to build new homes that let people in,” **said Rep. Schakowsky**. “We have the ability to increase mobility and improve quality of life for America’s disabled; failure to act is a moral crime.”

**Rep. James Langevin:** “Too many people with disabilities continue to face barriers to affordable, accessible housing,” said Langevin, who co-chairs the bipartisan Disabilities Caucus. “It is time we take additional steps to make taxpayer-funded housing more inclusive for individuals with mobility impairments and their families, allowing them to live more independently within their communities.”

□ **Rep. Luis Gutierrez:** “This bill is long past due. Given the number of Americans who will face accessibility issues in their lifetime, it only makes sense to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used thoughtfully and responsibly in the first place. This is an important step toward ensuring that disabled individuals face one less obstacle on the path to independence.”

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