

## DISABILITY RIGHTS

# Building a Movement for Social Change

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- :19 Currently, 1 in 8 Americans experience a disability that effects mobility and millions more will face a short-term disability affecting mobility at some point in their lives. People experiencing disabilities often struggle to negotiate dangerous and inconvenient obstacles in the built environment.
- :37 George Locascio was stricken with polio in 1945 at the age of 19 while serving in the US Navy in the Philippines. He spent more than 30 years using a wheelchair or crutches. He knew what it was like to live with a disability. His best known fight was in 1988 when he battled the city and filed a lawsuit over inadequate seating for the disabled at what was then the Florida Suncoast Dome. The stadium only had 137 wheelchair spaces relegated to one floor. Federal guidelines require the stadium the size of the Dome to have at least 440 spaces in various areas throughout the facility. Locascio saw the Dome as another example of society's insensitivity to the disabled. The lawsuit was settled in 1990 resulting in additional wheelchair seating and improvements to the restroom and concession areas. In 2006, at the age of 80, Locascio was awarded a lifetime achievement award from Abilities, Inc. George Locascio died on December 5, 2009 at the age of 83.
- 2:05 The ADA was first introduced in Congress in 1988 and was signed into law by President George HW Bush on July 26, 1990. Long before that, in 1972, the city of St. Petersburg established the Committee to Advocate for Persons with Impairments to do just as the name applies. By 2003, the city of St. Petersburg had installed an estimated 4500 curb cuts to help people move easily from sidewalk to street, improving access to wheelchairs and improve the urban environment for all.
- 2:38 The disability rights movement started when people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities began to challenge the system. It took years of organizing, filing lawsuits, testifying on the state and federal level, mailing, phone calls, letter writing and sometimes even getting arrested. The disability rights movement, like so many others, adopted many of the strategies of the civil rights movement.

