



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS

For Immediate Release

ACCESSIBLE PARKING METERS, CURB RAMPS AND OUT-OF-STATE PARKING PLACARDS, FINALLY, THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 26, 2006—The Equal Rights Center (ERC), together with attorneys from the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and Morrison & Foerster, LLP, announce today the settlement of a groundbreaking lawsuit against the District of Columbia that will require the District to make its 17,000 parking meters more accessible to individuals with disabilities. Also spurred by this lawsuit is the DC City Council's passage of legislation that restores the ability of persons with disabilities to use their out-of-state parking permits in the District.

Until this new legislation and settlement, the vehicles of persons with disabilities have been ticketed at expired meters if they did not display a special District parking placard, even if those meters were inaccessible, and even if the vehicles displayed a valid parking placard from another state. DC has been the only jurisdiction in the US not to recognize parking placards issued by other jurisdictions.

"The result here is not just accessible parking meters; it's usable curb ramps and passable sidewalks," stated Kathleen Walsh of the Equal Rights Center. Under this settlement, every single block with parking meters in the District will have a usable curb ramp."

The settlement agreement resolves a lawsuit filed by Maryland resident Russell Holt, Delaware resident John Folan, United Spinal Association, a membership organization of individuals with spinal cord injuries or disorders, and the ERC, a not-for-profit civil rights membership organization seeking to eliminate discrimination, including discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Mr. Holt, a wheelchair user, asserted that the meters were inaccessible to him because they were too high, or because he was unable to maneuver his wheelchair close enough to the meter to reach the coin slot. This was because of significantly uneven or cracked sidewalks and other obstacles such as flower boxes and concrete barriers. Ready, willing and able to pay, he could not. So, he was vulnerable to tickets and towing.

The late Mr. Folan, who has been replaced in this lawsuit by his surviving spouse, Mary Folan, lived in Delaware, but often traveled to the District for doctors' appointments and to visit his children. In order to take advantage of the parking accommodations offered to individuals with District-issued disability parking placards, but not to individuals with out-of-state parking placards, Mr. Folan would have had to apply for a District parking placard. This was an extremely burdensome process that had to be completed each year, required highly personal and irrelevant medical records, and involved the scheduling of a doctors' appointment.

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Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn of the ERC said "We're making real progress toward the day when persons with disabilities will no longer face discrimination that creates such unacceptable examples of inequality. The nation's capital is the last place in the country where such inequality should occur."

Under the terms of this settlement, the District will:

- Ensure that each block face with parking meters has curb ramps, and that at least one curb ramp at each corner of intersecting metered block faces conforms with the newest accessibility standards;
- Install and designate at least two (2) accessible parking meters on each block face containing parking meters (the accessible meters will be low enough for an individual using a wheelchair or scooter to operate and have sufficient clear, adjacent sidewalk space to access it);
- Require that any newly-installed meters be at an accessible height and face the sidewalk;
- Remove other sidewalk barriers, such as planters and uneven surfaces, in order to create accessible routes to the accessible parking meters; and
- Revise its policy to make it easier for individuals to obtain parking placards.

Originally established in 1983 as the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington, the Equal Rights Center is a private, not-for-profit, civil rights agency that is now a product of mergers with both the Fair Employment Council in 1999 and the Disability Rights Council of Greater Washington on June 30, 2005. It is dedicated to identifying, challenging, and eliminating discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services through education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy. To obtain more information about the Equal Rights Center, please go to www.equalrightscenter.org or call the Equal Rights Center at (202) 234-3062.

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs was established in 1968 to provide pro bono legal services to address issues of discrimination and entrenched poverty. Since its founding, the Committee has handled more than 5,000 cases on behalf of individuals and advocacy organizations in the areas of equal employment, fair housing, public accommodations, public education, asylum and refugee rights, and disability rights. For more information about the Committee, see www.washlaw.org. The Committee can be reached at (202) 319-1000.

Morrison & Foerster is a full service law firm with over one thousand lawyers in nineteen offices around the world with an awarding winning pro bono program and a commitment to matters of public interest and service to the local community. For more information, please visit: www.mofo.com.

United Spinal Association is a national nonprofit advocacy organization for veterans

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and all people with spinal cord injuries or disorders. In addition to helping write the Americans with Disabilities Act, United Spinal was also instrumental in drafting portions of the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) and the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA). The Association promotes compliance with these laws and educates the public about them. For more information, please visit: www.unitedspinal.org or call 800-404-2898.

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