



**For Immediate Release**

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## Equal Rights Center and CVS Caremark Reach Agreement to Make Stores More Accessible

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 21, 2010 – Today, the Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, and CVS Caremark announced their agreement and initiative to help ensure that CVS stores across the country will be more accessible to people with disabilities.

“For the millions of people with disabilities in our country, the ability to easily access CVS’s pharmacies, medical advice and services, and general merchandise they offer, is a critical part of their everyday lives,” said Don Kahl, Executive Director of the ERC. “With this monumental nation-wide agreement, the largest retail pharmacy chain in the country will be working with the ERC to adopt accessibility practices and policies that will better serve all people with disabilities. We certainly hope that other pharmacies will recognize their unique importance and responsibilities to the disability community and follow CVS’s example.”

As part of the agreement, CVS Caremark, the nation’s largest retail pharmacy chain with more than 7,000 retail stores, will survey and remove barriers to accessibility at all stores it remodels or alters. It will remove all barriers at each of its “Minute Clinics” within eighteen months. New procedures will ensure that CVS store aisles are kept clear and accessible, and an independent survey company will monitor the accessibility of CVS store aisles. Within one year of the agreement, every CVS store will have wheelchair accessible front and pharmacy counters. CVS will also hire an independent ADA consultant to review and monitor CVS’s policies and procedures for design and construction, store operations, and training of store employees in order to ensure that CVS stores remain compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). CVS has also agreed to provide reports to the ERC on its progress, and to consider ERC’s input on policies and training. CVS will pay the plaintiffs for damages and attorneys’ fees incurred in the matter.

In 2009 the ERC was approached by several individuals who use wheelchairs who all identified accessibility issues at CVS locations due to aisles being blocked with merchandise and displays, a lack of accessible routes to sales counters and the pharmacy, a lack of accessible spaces in parking lots, and other barriers to accessibility. After surveying 50 CVS locations and finding accessibility issues at all 50 locations, the ERC approached CVS who agreed to work with the ERC to make their stores more accessible.

“As the Americans with Disabilities Act celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we are happy to see another national business leader demonstrate its commitment to providing quality and accessible services to all individuals,” said Elaine Gardner, Disability Rights Project Director at the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

In reaching this agreement, the ERC was represented by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs and the Washington law firm of Gilbert LLP.

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**About the Equal Rights Center ([www.equalrightscenter.org](http://www.equalrightscenter.org))**

Since 1983, the Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, has worked to identify, challenge, and eliminate discrimination. The ERC combats discrimination in housing, employment, access to public accommodations and government services, disability rights and immigrant rights, through education and outreach, research, testing, counseling, advocacy and enforcement.

**About the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (<http://www.washlaw.org>)**

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and 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](http://www.washlaw.org). The Committee can be reached at 202.319.1000.

**About Gilbert LLP (<http://www.gilbertslaw.ca/home.html>)**

Gilbert LLP is an agile, energetic law firm with an astonishing track record, at the heart of some of North America's most complex and sophisticated litigation and legal issues. The firm's history is rooted in advocacy, regulatory negotiations, government relations, and intellectual property challenges, across borders. Gilbert LLP makes business sense of the complex and unconventional, allowing it to provide clients with unique solutions. Its focus and noteworthy accomplishments are related to pharmaceuticals, life sciences, technology, engineering, the environment and other areas of invention and original thought.

