



# ADAPT FREE OUR PEOPLE!



Nothing is more sacred to Americans than the freedoms promised by the Declaration of Independence.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

- Declaration of Independence

While the Declaration provides the philosophical basis for our government, the equally important Constitution established the structure of government and the rules for its operation. Much has changed since these critical documents were originally written. The founders who wrote the Declaration of Independence and crafters of the Constitution never could have even considered the implications of their words and work for people with significant disabilities. The medicine and technology that allow us to live simply did not exist, so neither did we. They never imagined Americans would use ventilators to breathe, wheelchairs for mobility or rely on paid attendants to get in and out of bed so they could seek education, opportunity, career and family.

The rights guaranteed under the Constitution apply to all Americans. As noted last year by conservative social and political commentator Ann Coulter, the founders of this nation didn't include an asterisk in that document that exempted or applied Constitutional rights to any specific group. Even so, disabled Americans are routinely forced into nursing facilities and institutions where they are stripped of their personal liberties. It is time for conservatives – fiscal, political and social – to acknowledge that Americans with disabilities are, first and foremost, Americans entitled to the freedoms and liberties guaranteed to them as Americans. **Today, ADAPT demands that the Heritage Foundation:**

- **Publicly acknowledge that the Americans with disabilities are being denied their Constitutional rights to life, liberty and due process when they are forced into nursing facilities and other institutions; and**
- **Issue a statement that the Heritage Foundation supports the Disability Integration Act, bipartisan/bicameral legislation that strengthens the ADA's integration mandate and ensures no disabled individual is denied their Constitutional right to liberty by requiring people with disabilities be provided a community-based alternative to institutional placement that allows them to lead an independent life.**