



With a flourish, President George W. Bush

signed a proclamation marking the 12th anniversary of the American Disabilities Act. "Today I'm proud to announce a change in the Medicare homebound rule. It has been changed to apply to people who can leave their homes for short periods of time," the President said.

Matt Memmer, a third-year student in Washburn University School of Law, can take some of the credit for that change which ensures that nearly 600 disabled people will not lose their Medicare benefits because they leave their homes too many times during the month. Memmer's contribution to the effort came about because of his work as an intern at the National Council for Independent Living in Washington, DC.

While attending a meeting where White House Disability Liaison Troy Justesen was present, Memmer became involved in a discussion of the homebound rule. He cited a *Washington Post* article by former Kansas Senator Bob Dole '52 about the need to change the rule. Based on his involvement with ADA activities and organizations including the Topeka Independent Living Resource Center where he works for Kirk Lowry '87, Memmer backed up Dole's article.

He reported on the disabled community's wish for a change in the rule and noted it would be beneficial for the White House to support the change.

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Student

Matt Memmer at the White House

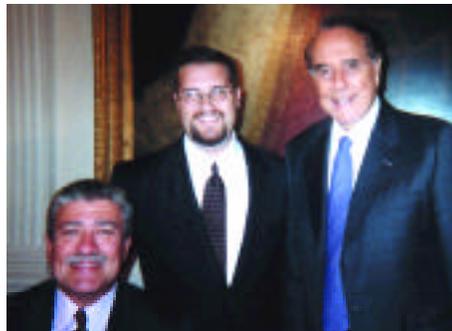
Following the meeting, Memmer was asked to do legislative research on the subject. He carried out the work, wrote a report, and presented his findings to Justesen. A second meeting with Justesen and White House staff ensued. During the White House meeting, questions about the homebound rule arose. Memmer responded with a two-minute speech based on his research about the rule and why it should be changed. "That was it; the meeting was over," Memmer said. "I had my two minutes of unexpected fame."

A few weeks later, Memmer received a phone call from Justesen informing him that there might be some movement on the homebound rule and inviting him to the White



Matt Memmer '03

House ADA proclamation ceremony. "I was in awe of the dignitaries in attendance and those I met and spoke with," Memmer recalled. In addition to former Senator Dole, they included John Wodatch, head of ADA enforcement for the Department of Justice; John Kemp '74, a disabilities advocate; Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa; Attorney General John Ashcroft; Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao; and Secretary of



John Kemp '74, Matt Memmer '03 & former Senator Robert Dole '52

Transportation Norman Mineta.

Following the signing ceremony, Justesen introduced Memmer to President Bush as someone who had done extensive work and research on the homebound rule. For once, Memmer was speechless. "I stayed up all night

thinking of what I would say to the most powerful person in the country and the points I would make regarding disability rights, and when the time came, I couldn't say anything at all," he said.

Reviewing his work in the nation's capital, Memmer believes his dispute resolution and negotiation courses at Washburn Law helped him tremendously in his internship. "Anything having to do with legal research and looking up cases and doing things for Professor (Peter) Cotorceanu was most helpful," he said. "Having a person with a legal background, who can research items and issues and bring in the law and hard facts just totally bolsters what we can do in the House, the Senate, and the Executive Branch," he added.

His Washington experience has helped Memmer find his niche in the area of disabilities. "I felt before my internship that everything was abstract and now I feel I have a baton in my hand and a number of laps to race. When the subject of Medicare and Medicaid comes up, my ears perk up," he said.