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## *Senate*

### 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY, INDEPENDENT LIVING, AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, on behalf of millions of people with disabilities, today I wish to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, NIDILRR, and its 40 years of accomplishments and contributions to the lives of people with disabilities.

NIDILRR is the Federal agency supporting applied research, demonstration, training, and technical assistance to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities. NIDILRR's mission is to generate new knowledge and to promote its effective use to improve the abilities of people with disabilities to perform activities of their choice in the community and to expand society's capacity to provide full opportunities and accommodations for our citizens with disabilities. NIDILRR carries out its mission by building the capacity of institutions and individuals to conduct high-quality research in the major life domains, including employment, participation in the community, community integration, and health.

NIDILRR plays a unique and critical role in Federal research. NIDILRR-sponsored projects and programs target populations that include all disability types and all age groups. While other Federal research entities fund prevention, cure, and acute rehabilitation research, which are vital for people with disabilities, NIDILRR invests in applied research meant to quickly translate to greater independence, community participation, and employment for people with disabilities.

The many contributions of NIDILRR's grantees cannot be overstated. Our Nation owes a debt of gratitude to the researchers and practitioners whose efforts empower people with disabilities to lead proud, productive lives in pursuit of independence, community living, and employment. During October, which is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, it is important to highlight the major role that NIDILRR has played in promoting and enabling the employment of people with disabilities. Over the past 40 years, NIDILRR-funded researchers have been extraordinarily productive, including in my home State of Washington. Across the United States, grantees have created more than 1,200 new products, including peer-reviewed publications, intervention protocols, measurement tools, and software and technologies that impact the field of rehabilitation and enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

NIDILRR-funded fellowship programs have trained and supported a substantial number of emerging scholars, researchers, and policy implementation experts, including a significant focus on scholars with disabilities and those from minority communities. NIDILRR-funded fellows have contributed to substantive policy development in Congress, including by serving as content experts on my staff at the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. NIDILRR supports the ADA National Network, which provides information, guidance, and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act to businesses, employers, State and local governments, architects, disability organizations, and individuals with disabilities. In addition, NIDILRR also supports AbleData, an information center hosting an extensive database of assistive technology products and resources to increase awareness of and access to assistive devices. Finally, NIDILRR supports the National Rehabilitation Information Center, NARIC, a research library and information center that promotes access to disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research information.

The need for NIDILRR's important work will only increase in the coming decades. Demographic trends indicate a substantial increase in the number of people with disabilities as a result of the effects of injuries, illnesses, chronic conditions, developmental disabilities, and an aging population. NIDILRR will continue to play a critical role in empowering this growing population of individuals with disabilities to live the American dream. The next 40 years of NIDILRR hold much promise for the future of addressing the emerging needs of people with disabilities and the need for disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research.

I congratulate the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research on its 40th anniversary and the significant accomplishments and contributions it has made to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities in the United States. I am proud of the work NIDILRR has funded and the dedicated researchers and practitioners that have improved employment, participation and community integration, and health and function for people with disabilities. I look forward to 40 more years of NIDILRR's continued contributions to our society.