

Bill Would Make Govt. Buildings Accessible to All

WASHINGTON--Senator E.L. (Bob) Bartlett urged swift passage of a bill to require that public buildings constructed with federal funds be designed so they are accessible to all the public, including the physically handicapped.

In his testimony before a Senate Committee on Public Works subcommittee Bartlett said that this bill would formalize a policy followed by 28 states and followed verbally, but not always in practice by the federal government in construction of public buildings.

Bartlett introduced the bill

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in the Senate January 12, and since that time more than 20 other Senators have joined him in cosponsorship of it. Bartlett termed the wide support an indication of "the righteousness of this cause."

Bartlett told the subcommittee, "In one sense this may be considered by some an unimportant bill since it contains no seeds of controversy, carries with it no appropriation, and will cost the taxpayers of this country only a nominal amount. It is not a trail-blazing experiment. I would characterize it more as a very belated attempt on our part to catch up, to discharge a long-overdue responsibility."

The Senator said he would

be opposed at this time, because of the expense involved, to requiring alteration of existing public buildings.

He said that access problems which need remedial action would best be taken up in a case by case basis.

Bartlett also opposed involved studies of the problem that would delay implementation of the program.

"What this problem area needs is a logical and justifiable start," Senator Bartlett said.

"I think it is obvious that this bill would increase the productivity of our physically handicapped citizens by affording them new opport-

unities for jobs in buildings to which they once might have been denied access, and by permitting increased efficiency in the business they transact in such buildings," he said.

Senator Bartlett said that what is important in this issue is the fact that "the physically handicapped are citizens of this country—just as others of us are; they pay taxes and contribute to the economy of the country just as others of us do; and they deserve access to their public buildings on an equal basis with the rest of us."

"This is all they ask—and it is all I ask," the Senator concluded.