



Seattle Commits to Ensuring an Accessible City

Release Date: July 18, 2017

Contacts:

Emily Cooper, Disability Rights Washington, (206) 324-1521

Timothy Fox, Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center, (303) 757-7901

Linda Dardarian, Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho, (510) 763-9800

SEATTLE – The City of Seattle has settled a landmark class action lawsuit by committing to installing over twenty thousand accessible curb ramps throughout Seattle over the next eighteen years. Curb ramps provide people with mobility disabilities a safe way to get on and off sidewalks as they travel through the pedestrian right of way.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the country; census figures estimate that 56.7 million, or 1 in 5, Americans has a disability. In Seattle alone, there are approximately 26,000 people with mobility disabilities who use wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, or other mobility devices to get around. Missing, broken, or poorly maintained curb ramps prevent people with mobility disabilities from safely using city sidewalks, crosswalks and other walkways to participate in daily activities like getting to work or going to school.

“As a lawyer with a disability practice in Seattle, I am beyond thrilled with this agreement,” said Conrad Reynoldson, one of the plaintiffs who brought the case. “This means that both my clients and I will have full, equal, and safe access to an inclusive community. It has been hard finishing up law school, setting up my practice, or even getting to court, when I have to figure out a way to get there that doesn’t involve me going blocks out of my way or traveling in the street due to a missing curb ramp.”

David Whedbee, another plaintiff, explains "beyond the thousands of new curb ramps, one of Seattle’s most promising commitments is improving how a citizen can request a new curb ramp or fix a broken curb ramp. They no longer have to figure out how to do this on their own. Instead, this agreement makes sure that there is one clear, easy system for installing or fixing curb ramps.”

“Federal and state disability access laws were enacted decades ago to provide persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to fully participate in civic life,” said Tim Fox, plaintiffs’ counsel and co-founder of the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center. “Today, we stand

together with the City of Seattle to fulfill the promise of those laws by ensuring that people with disabilities can travel independently throughout their communities.”

“With inclusion as our guiding principle, today, we are making Seattle safer and more accessible for everyone by correcting a problem that has persisted for decades,” said Mayor Ed Murray. “By building thousands of curb ramps we are righting a wrong that prevented people with mobility disabilities from easily moving around the city. It has been a priority of my administration to ensure everyone has dependable, safe access to our entire transportation network. Our commitment to building curb ramps fits with our ambitious Pedestrian Master Plan, Vision Zero, and our transportation levies. Thank you to City Attorney Pete Holmes and his team for making today a reality.”

About Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho

GBDH is one of the oldest and most successful plaintiffs’ public interest class action law firms in the country. GBDH represents individuals against large companies and public entities in complex, class and collective action lawsuits in the firm’s three primary practice areas: employment discrimination, wage and hour violations, and disability access, as well as in other public interest areas. The firm is in Oakland, California, and has a national practice, litigating cases in federal and state courts throughout the United States. To read more about GBDH, visit: www.gbdhlegal.com

About the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center

CREEC is a nonprofit organization based in Denver that has the goal of ensuring that everyone can fully and independently participate in our nation’s civic life without discrimination based on race, gender, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. CREEC attorneys have successfully litigated numerous class actions brought under state and federal disability rights laws, including actions addressing private and public transportation services, provision of Medicaid benefits, stadium accessibility, and accessibility of services to deaf and blind individuals. To learn more about CREEC, visit: www.creeclaw.org

About Disability Rights Washington

DRW is a private non-profit organization with offices in Seattle and Spokane that protects the rights of people with disabilities across Washington. DRW works to pursue justice on matters related to human and legal rights. DRW provides free services to people with disabilities to promote its mission to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. To learn more about DRW, visit: www.disabilityrightswa.org