



COUNCIL ON
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

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To the Editor,

As a person with a physical disability, I am appalled that Representative Jimmy Anderson's request to join committee meetings via telephone was denied. Being a person with a disability is a minority many Americans may identify with at any point in their life. Yet, few people can understand the difficulties and even dangers that people with disabilities face on a daily basis until they experience it themselves.

I understand and respect that there is a legislative rule that does not allow state legislators to participate in committee meetings via telephone; however, there is something called a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is assistance or changes to a position or workplace that will enable an employee to do his or her job despite having a disability. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees with disabilities, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. Our government must be held to the same standards as any other employer. In this day and age of technology, this request is not unreasonable. Yet, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and Republicans who control the Legislature have declined to accommodate Representative Anderson's request.

It is my hope that state legislators who do not share this opinion will work to get this legislative rule amended so reasonable accommodation requests made by state legislators can be met in the future. I am also saddened as an advocate that there is still need to educate others on reasonable accommodations 29 years after the passage of ADA. I hope my brothers and sisters with disabilities will remember the actions of these state legislators when they go to the polls to vote! I am proud to have Representative Anderson, a person with a disability, who understands the needs of people with disabilities, giving a voice to those with disabilities who work and live in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Ben Barrett, Chairperson
Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities