“In January 2012, my life changed forever when I suffered an ischemic stroke. If it weren’t for the quick response of paramedics and the outstanding surgeons and staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, I would not have survived. Unfortunately, less than five percent of stroke patients get tPA therapy like I did, the only approved treatment for an acute stroke. By expanding use of tPA and telestroke, we can make sure other stroke victims have the same positive outcome I did. That’s why I introduced the S. 1465, the FAST Act, which would allow Medicare to reimburse for telestroke services no matter where they occur. My stroke has left my left side paralyzed and I spend a portion of my time in a wheelchair. The stroke has made me much more empathetic as a person. These days, one of my missions in office has been to reach out to everybody in Illinois who suffers a stroke or other disability. As a stroke survivor I know better than most the value of research and rehabilitation in helping patients return to work and lead fulfilling lives. Stroke patients and individuals recovering from other catastrophic medical events deserve access to the best rehabilitation available. My experience has increased my dedication to improving the lives of people living with disabilities.” – Senator Kirk

Senator Kirk knows firsthand how important the Americans with Disabilities Act is to elevating the independence of the 50 million Americans living with a disability. Laws like the ADA allow all Americans to live life on their own terms.

Senator Kirk’s staff includes a Disability & Equality Advisor who presents the Senator with disability issues and legislation.

**Supports Securing Continued Funding For IDEA**  
Senator Kirk supports considering funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) every year. He continually urges his colleagues to fully fund IDEA within each funding bill so we can move the needle closer to the 40 percent commitment we made thirty years ago.

**Committed To Helping Fellow Stroke Survivors**  
**Increase Stroke Research Funds:** Senator Kirk led efforts to increase research funding for StrokeNet, a first of its kind research consortium within National Institutes for Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS). NINDS – the leading stroke research agency in the federal government – receives an additional $107 million in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) Appropriations Bill for fiscal year (FY) 2017 which passed committee. While heart disease, stroke and other forms of cardiovascular disease remain our Nation’s most costly disease, NIH invests only four percent of its budget on heart research and one percent on stroke research. Therefore the increased funding for StrokeNet in this bill will support a revolutionary network of research that will help stroke patients return to work faster following recovery.

**Battle Buddies:** Senator Kirk created “Kirk’s Battle Buddies” in February 2015 to inspire and push individuals to continue working hard with their rehabilitation. Senator Kirk encouraged the “battle buddies,” who are all at various stages of their recoveries to set physical goals, from climbing steps at home to competing stair climbs in all of Illinois’ tallest buildings.

**Shining A Light On Oppressed People Around The World  
Co-founded the Human Rights Caucus:** Senator Kirk and Senator Coons formed the Senate Human Rights Caucus in the spirit of The Congressional Human Rights Caucus, originally created by former Congressmen Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) and John Porter (R-Ill.) in 1983. Later re-named the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, its members have been working to defend and advocate for internationally recognized human rights in a nonpartisan manner for more than 30 years. The Senate Human Rights Caucus seeks to continue the Commission’s legacy by highlighting and defending key human rights issues throughout the world.

**Supported The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):** Senator Kirk supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted by the UN in 2006. In 2014, Senator Kirk encouraged Senate ratification on this measure and stated that the CRPD will ensure that our wounded warriors and disabled citizens are entitled to the same rights and protections around the world that they enjoy here at home.

**Fighting For All Veterans Including Those Injured In War  
Co-Founded the Veterans Job Caucus:** In 2012, Senator Kirk and Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.V.) established the Congressional Veterans Jobs Caucus that seeks to create solutions for the challenges of all Active Duty, Reserve and Guard members face as they transition to civilian life – including those that come home with injuries from their service.

**Support Key Disability Legislation**

* 1986 – The (American) [Air Carrier Access Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Carrier_Access_Act)
* 1990 – The [Americans with Disabilities Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americans_with_Disabilities_Act_of_1990) (ADA)
* 1990 – The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individuals_with_Disabilities_Education_Act) (IDEA)
* 1992 – Amendments to the (American) [Rehabilitation Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rehabilitation_Act) of 1973
* 2002 –[Help America Vote Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help_America_Vote_Act) (HAVA) – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2002/roll462.xml)
* 2004 – The[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](http://idea.ed.gov/) – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/roll537.xml)
* 2006 –[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) – Voiced Support
* 2008 – The[Americans with Disabilities Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americans_with_Disabilities_Act)  (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll460.xml)
* 2008 –[Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_Information_Nondiscrimination_Act_of_2008) – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll261.xml) & [Voted In Favor of Amended Senate Version](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll234.xml)
* 2009 – The[Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Shepard_and_James_Byrd,_Jr._Hate_Crimes_Prevention_Act) – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll770.xml)
* 2010 – The[21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=21st_Century_Communications_and_Video_Accessibility_Act&action=edit&redlink=1) – [Voted Yes](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll469.xml)
* 2013 – The[Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workforce_Innovation_and_Opportunity_Act) (WIOA) – [Voted Yes](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=2&vote=00214)
* 2014 – The Stephen Beck, Jr.[Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Achieving_a_Better_Life_Experience_Act_of_2014&action=edit&redlink=1) (ABLE Act)
* 2014 –[Every Student Succeeds Act](https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/hrpt354/CRPT-114hrpt354.pdf) – [Voted Yes](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=114&session=1&vote=00334)