



# Department of Justice

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## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACHES AGREEMENT WITH RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA, TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF CIVIC CENTER**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today announced an agreement with Rapid City, South Dakota, to remedy architectural accessibility issues that violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center (Civic Center). This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which the Civil Rights Division plays a critical role in enforcing.

Rapid City and the U.S. Department of Justice reached an agreement under Project Civic Access (PCA), the department's wide-ranging initiative to ensure that cities, towns and counties throughout the country comply with the ADA. Under the agreement, Rapid City is required to ensure that the 11 parking areas surrounding the Civic Center will comply with the ADA's 2010 Standards for Accessible Design.

The agreement with Rapid City will allow people with disabilities to access county buildings, such as Connie Whitley and Jim Nelson, who attended the Black Hills Works Gala, a formal event that brings nearly 800 people from the area together to honor people with disabilities. Upon arriving at the Civic Center, where the gala was taking place, the couples' driver found a spot that was designated as accessible, but in practice was not. It lacked the required "access aisle," leaving Ms. Whitley and Mr. Nelson no room to get out of the car with their wheelchairs. After finding another spot and maneuvering through the snow, the couple then found that a side entrance at the Civic Center as well as the door to the room where the gala was being held were also not accessible. The size of their wheelchairs requires both double doors to be held open – a difficult task with only one staff person present.

Experiences like this, however, will become a thing of the past over the next three years thanks to the PCA agreement. You can learn more about Ms. Whitley and Mr. Nelson's story by checking out the [Justice Department blog](#), where each month of 2015, the department is highlighting how PCA agreements have an impact on the everyday lives of people with disabilities.

Under the agreement, the Civic Center will have the required number of designated accessible parking spaces, including van-accessible spaces. Each space will be the appropriate

size, have an access aisle and accessible signage, and be on the shortest accessible route to an accessible entrance.

“Connie and Jim’s story reminds us of the kinds of things people with disabilities face every day; the kinds of things that many of us take for granted,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta of the Civil Rights Division. “Something as simple as getting in the door should not become a Herculean feat. Under today’s agreement, in addition to getting in the door, more will be done by Rapid City to make its Civic Center accessible to persons with disabilities. The agreement addresses companion seating for wheelchair users, public restrooms, interior ramps, drinking fountains and even dressing rooms for performers with disabilities.”

For more information about the ADA, today’s agreement, the PCA initiative, individuals may access the ADA web page at <http://www.ada.gov/civicac.htm> or call the toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

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