

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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February 5, 2010

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LETTER FROM THE ARC TO RUSH LIMBAUGH: MEET WITH US

February 5, 2010

Mr. Rush Limbaugh
1270 Avenue of the Americas, 9th Fl.
New York, NY 10020

Dear Mr. Limbaugh:

I am writing on behalf of The Arc of the United States (The Arc), the oldest and largest national nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of and serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With 730+ chapters nationwide, The Arc is committed to the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Earlier this week, on behalf of The Arc, I participated in a frank discussion with White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, regarding comments he made that offended our constituency. On the same day, you engaged in extensive commentary about that meeting, as well as the events surrounding it, using the same offensive language.

I am inviting you to meet personally with a group of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their parents, and siblings to engage in an open and honest dialogue regarding the language you used in your recent commentary. We would like to provide you the opportunity to hear, first hand, why people with intellectual and developmental disabilities believe the words "retard" and "retarded" and similar phrases need to be removed from common use.

Self-advocates, parents, disability rights activists and others are rightly concerned that your comments simply serve to further degrade and denigrate the 7 million individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who struggle on a daily basis to be included in society. We believe that a face to face meeting to discuss these concerns and share the personal impact on these individuals would go far in informing you and your listeners.

I cannot understate the effect of a word many consider an epithet – it is deeply offensive to people that are living with intellectual disabilities, and the tens of millions of their parents, siblings, family members and friends. It is a harsh reminder of the institutionalization, sterilization, abuse, discrimination, violence and exclusion they have faced, and continue to face, as they merely seek to live typical lives.

I invite you to meet with a group of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in a city of your choosing – New York, Washington, DC, or another location. I look forward to a favorable reply.

Sincerely,

Peter V. Berns
Chief Executive Officer