



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

October 20, 2009

The Honorable William J Lynn, III

Message from the Deputy Secretary of Defense

Welcome to the 2009 Department of Defense AbilityOne National Disability Employment Awareness Month Recognition Ceremony. The Department is proud to be the main customer of the AbilityOne Program which is the single largest source of employment in the United States for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

President Obama's *Plan to Empower People with Disabilities* calls for an increase in employment for people with disabilities. The Department creates job opportunities nationwide for this valuable segment of the population through the acquisition of quality products and services that support the DoD mission. AbilityOne employees proudly support the mission in many ways -- from making pens used Department-wide to producing combat uniforms worn by our Armed Forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The acquisition workforce understands there is a tremendous opportunity to reap rewards and make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities by entering into a contract with a participating AbilityOne nonprofit agency.

The leadership of the Department is committed to increasing business with the AbilityOne Program. Nearly 2,000 of our Wounded Warriors and service-disabled veterans have transitioned to employment with the AbilityOne Program, enabling them to continue to serve our country and support our military with pride. This unprecedented number of veterans may be attributed to the strong DoD leadership support of the AbilityOne Program. The Department believes it is critical to provide all Americans who are blind or have other significant disabilities every opportunity to contribute to our great Nation.

We are honored today to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of the AbilityOne employees, DoD acquisition professionals, and members of industry. I congratulate all of you for a job well done, and I thank you for your continued support on this 71st Anniversary of the AbilityOne Program and the 19th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. J. Lynn III", is located at the bottom right of the page.