THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

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Memorandum

To: Solicitor
Inspector General
Assistant Secretaries
Bureau and Office Heads

From: P. Lynn Scarlett
Deputy Secretary

Subject: Celebrate the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act Program

The new fiscal year is the perfect time to celebrate the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (JWOD) Program. Under the JWOD Program, government purchase card users and acquisition personnel buy supplies and services furnished by nonprofit agencies employing people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities.

The theme of this year's celebration is "JWOD Works for America." The Department of the Interior provides employment and training opportunities for people with severe disabilities, through our support of the JWOD Program. Under JWOD, supplies and services purchased by Federal agencies currently generate jobs for more than 45,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

The JWOD Program provides employment opportunities in local communities nationwide for a population that continues to experience an exceptionally high unemployment rate—in sharp contrast to the national unemployment rate of 5 percent, nearly 70 percent of people with disabilities are not employed. The JWOD Program was created by Congress to help alleviate this employment inequity. The Program has become the largest single source of employment of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities, by identifying Federal contract work to be performed by these individuals.

President Bush cited these statistics in his *New Freedom Initiative* for people with disabilities, and he pledged the Administration's commitment to increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce. The major challenges to productive employment of qualified people with disabilities are attitudinal barriers and false assumptions about what people can and cannot do. What people with disabilities CAN do is be productive. Your efforts to develop awareness and to educate our workforce about this important issue will help ensure Interior makes an important contribution to President Bush's goal of fulfilling America's promise to Americans with disabilities.

The JWOD Program is a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities achieve greater independence and provide the Federal Government with a quality source of products and services. JWOD Program employment enables many individuals to reduce dependence on government support, join the ranks of taxpayers and contribute to the Federal Government's critical missions.

Please learn more about the important role you can play in the JWOD Program at www.jwod.gov and make a special effort to show your support as we celebrate the JWOD Program. Please contact the Department's JWOD Program Manager, Cindy Maltby, on 202-208-5562, or via email at **Cynthia_Maltby@ios.doi.gov** for additional information.