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The Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than two-thirds of Americans with disabilities are unemployed or vastly underemployed.

The Small Business Act (SBA) is meant to promote an entrepreneurial spirit. To a substantial degree America's economic success is tied to the freedom to engage in entrepreneurial activity and create one's own wealth. It has long been the policy of the United States to promote the economic well-being of traditionally disadvantaged groups by creating a variety of business incentive programs that allow these groups to participate in the mainstream of the nation's economy.

Section 8(a) of the SBA is a powerful program allowing businesses owned by racial, cultural, and ethnic minorities or women to secure federal contracts. However, this program is not extended to Americans with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities seeking 8(a) certification must take on the onerous task of proving that they are socially and economically disadvantaged, while individuals who are from a racial, cultural, or ethnic minority or women are presumed to be socially disadvantaged.

Census Bureau statistics indicate that people with disabilities occupy an inferior status in our society and are severely disadvantaged socially, vocationally, economically, and educationally. Yet physical or mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to participate fully in all aspects of society. Many people with disabilities have been precluded from doing so because of commonly held misconceptions about their abilities. The continued exclusion from these programs denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous.

Disabled people are also excluded from federal procurement practices. Under current law businesses attempting to secure large federal contracts must guarantee that they will subcontract a portion of the work to small businesses that are owned by traditionally disadvantaged populations. Again individuals with disabilities are not considered a traditionally disadvantaged population; thus businesses owned by individuals with disabilities cannot benefit from these entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act:

Amends Section 8(a). People with disabilities will be added to the list of those who are presumed to be socially disadvantaged. Doing this will extend the opportunity to secure federal contracts to disabled people.

Changes federal procurement practices. For-profit businesses attempting to secure large federal contracts can satisfy procurement requirements by subcontracting with businesses owned by individuals with disabilities.

**HELP UNLEASH THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITIES
OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

Sponsor the Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act

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