



## **US Business Leadership Network among National Partners to Establish National Technical Assistance Center for Employers on People with Disabilities;**

### **Cooperative Agreement will be lead by the Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) School**

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WASHINGTON, DC (October 23, 2009) – The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN®) today announced that it will be among several national partners charged with establishing a national technical assistance center for employers eager to hire people with disabilities.

The Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) School received a \$1.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) for the establishment of a national technical assistance center designed to assist employers in the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities. EDI has been involved in employer-related initiatives to promote the employment of people with disabilities for nearly 20 years. **Susanne Bruyère**, director of the EDI and ILR's associate dean of outreach, said "This newly-funded USDOL-ODEP Center at Cornell University is a wonderful opportunity to bring all of the resources and learning from our prior efforts to fruition. These efforts are targeted at improving hiring and workplace retention of the more than 50 million Americans with disabilities."

Leading a consortium of national partners, EDI will conduct innovative research, assist the labor department in developing demand-side policy, and share best practices with employers to enhance employment opportunities and the full integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. EDI's national partners include the AFL-CIO Center for Green Jobs, the Altarum Institute, the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies, the Conference Board, the Institute of Educational Leadership, the National Business and Disability Council, Rutgers University's John J. Heldrich Center, and the US Business Leadership Network.

ODEP provides national leadership on disability employment policy by developing and influencing disability employment policies and practices, building collaborative partnerships, and delivering authoritative and credible data on the employment of people with disabilities. Assistant Secretary for Labor for Disability Employment Policy **Kathy Martinez** said, "Employers must create workplace cultures in which employees with disabilities are as fully integrated and valued as those without disabilities. The national technical assistance center will be designed to identify how employers can change expectations and open the path to good jobs for people with disabilities."

"Through this cooperative agreement, employers will now have access to valuable information, resources and tools to help them achieve greater workplace diversity to include more employees with disabilities," summarized USBLN® Executive Director & General Counsel **John D. Kemp** on the USBLN® being a national partner. "With the combined expertise of Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute and numerous leading national organizations – and support from ODEP – employers nationwide stand to benefit from this new, innovative technical assistance center."

The USBLN® is the only national business organization with 60 BLN Affiliates in 36 states – including the District of Columbia – and more than 5000 employers using a “business to business” strategy to promote the business imperative of including people with disabilities in the workforce, marketplace and supplier chain.

For additional information about the USBLN® and its involvement in the new National Technical Assistance Center, please contact John D. Kemp by email at [john.kemp@ppsv.com](mailto:john.kemp@ppsv.com).

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