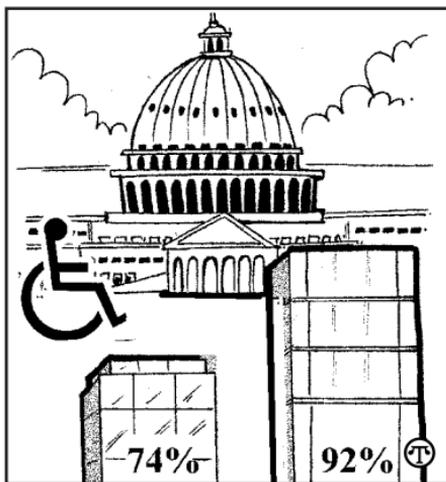


People Who Are Disabled Seen As A Strong Work Force

(NAPSA)—A significant majority of Americans agree that the federal government should increase work opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled, according to a new RoperASW survey. Over 1,000 adults were asked in a September 2002 telephone poll about their attitudes on the role of the government in purchasing products and services under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program, an employment program for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The findings reveal that 74 percent of the respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree that the federal government should purchase products and services under the JWOD Program and 92 percent strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that people who are blind or severely disabled should be able to work wherever they want if they can do the job.

The JWOD Program provides nearly 40,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities with employment through over 600 community-based non-profit agencies. Historically, people with disabilities face an unemployment rate of 70 percent, but under the JWOD Program workers are able to reduce their dependence on programs such as food stamps and Social Security. The Program uses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from participating agencies.

Each October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. During the month, federal agencies (including the military), hundreds of community-based nonprofit agen-



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cies and the JWOD Program Partners join forces to raise public awareness of the value of the employment program.

The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled is the independent federal agency that administers the JWOD Program, and is one of the three JWOD Program Partners. The other two partners are NISH, formerly the National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (creating employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities) and National Industries for the Blind (NIB).

The RoperASW survey was commissioned by the JWOD Program Partners to gain a better understanding of public opinion on issues relating to employment for people who are blind or severely disabled.