

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 11, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

We write today with concern for how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has interpreted the use of two critical statutes focused on providing economic independence and employment opportunities to Veterans and to members of the blind and disabled communities.

The Veterans First Contracting Program, created by the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 and the AbilityOne® Program, established through the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, serve complementary missions. Both programs are important to creating opportunities for underserved populations and can co-exist while meeting their respective objectives. It is our intent to affirm our support for both the AbilityOne Program and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and to clarify the goal of each program.

Enabling SDVOSBs to be more competitive in the VA contracting space is an important mission and the purpose of the Veterans First Contracting Program. The men and women who served this nation and were disabled as a result of that service deserve the opportunity to be competitive for federal contracts by being placed on a level playing field with similarly-situated businesses. Participation in this Program means that SDVOSBs have fewer companies to compete against in order to win a contract. That equalized playing field for competitive contracts was the intent of Congress.

The AbilityOne Program was created to provide employment opportunities to the blind or those who have significant disabilities, including veterans. That Program allows community-based nonprofit agencies to manufacture and deliver products or services found on the AbilityOne Procurement List. The federal government, in return, receives a ready-source of goods and services without the need to compete contracts. Society also benefits from a trained and employed blind and disabled workforce.

Our expectation is that the VA will cease attempting to take away any current AbilityOne Procurement List contracts from non-profit organizations employing people who are blind or severely disabled as that is not consistent with the intent of Congress. It is crucial to the stability of the AbilityOne agencies, that there is confidence in the VA's acquisition process. As such, rather than needlessly scrapping VA's long-standing and statutorily required relationship with AbilityOne non-profits, VA should prioritize SDVOSBs using the Rule of Two after seeking to

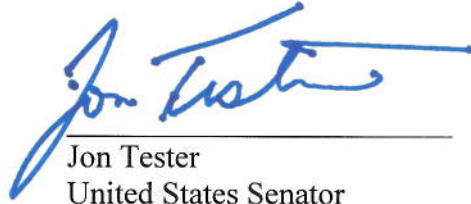
fulfill such requirements through the AbilityOne Procurement List. We request that the department take appropriate action to cease all such activity across the VA and all of its Veterans Integrated Services Networks.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and request that you execute both laws as intended by Congress.

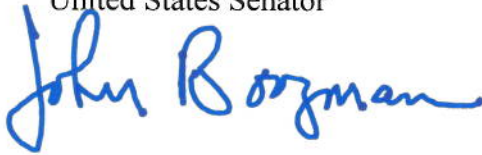
Respectfully,



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



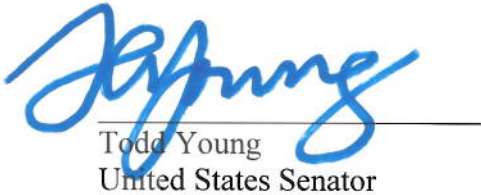
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John Boozman
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Todd Young
United States Senator

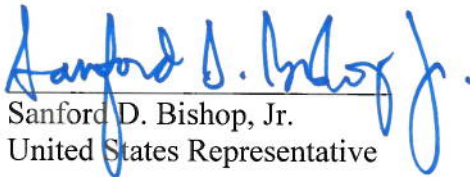


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United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

John Kennedy
United States Senator



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
United States Representative



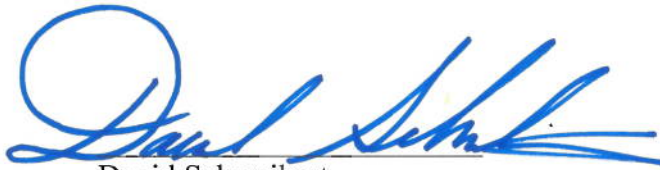
Ron Estes
United States Representative



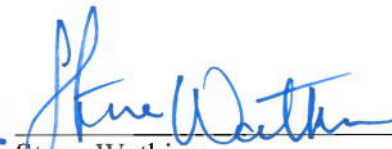
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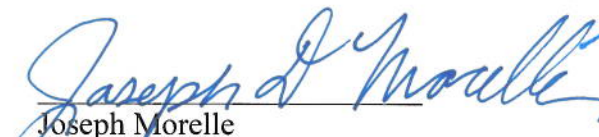
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