

**Committee for Purchase From People
Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled**

Contact: LaWanda York

Public Affairs

Phone: (703) 603-2128

Fax: (703) 603-0655

Email: lyork@jwod.gov

Web: www.abilityone.gov



Andrew Houghton, Committee Chairperson, administers the oath of office to (l to r) Patrick Leahy, Paul M. Laird, Kathleen A. James and Rear Admiral Alan S. Thompson.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Presidential Appointees Sworn In

Washington, DC, July 12, 2007—Andrew Houghton, Committee Chairperson, swore in four Presidential appointees to the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled this morning. The Committee is the independent federal agency that administers the AbilityOne (formerly known as JWOD) Program, which generates employment for individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

"We are honored to have the vast knowledge and experience that each new member brings to our Committee," Houghton said. "The newly appointed members play a vital leadership role in the strategic direction of the AbilityOne Program."

Sworn in are:

Kathleen A. James, of Virginia, is the newly appointed representative for Department of the Air Force. James is the Chief of the Air Force Labor Advisors Office. Since 1996, James held numerous staff positions within the Air Force Deputy Assistant Secretary (Contracting) organization. She provided support as a senior procurement analyst to the Air Force Program Executive Officers for Combat and Mission Support and C2 and Combat Support Systems.

Paul M. Laird, of Wisconsin, is the newly appointed representative the Department of Justice. Laird is the Assistant Director of the Industries, Education, and Vocational Training Division - Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Chief Operating Officer of Federal Prison Industries (UNICOR). Since 1988, Laird has served in various positions of increasing responsibility throughout the Department of Justice.

Patrick Leahy, of Maryland, is the newly appointed representative the Department of Commerce. Leahy currently serves as the Director of Legislative Affairs for Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez at the Department of Commerce. Before joining the Department, Leahy worked for the House Administration Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives.

(more)

Rear Admiral Alan S. Thompson, of Florida, is the newly appointed representative of the Department of the Navy. Thompson, Commander, Naval Supply Systems Command and 44th Chief of Supply Corps, is responsible for community management of over 3,400 active and Reserve Supply Corps officers and over 27,000 active and Reserve enlisted personnel.

The AbilityOne Program provides employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the manufacture and delivery of products and services to the federal government. The Committee determines which products and services purchased by the federal government must be procured from AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies. It establishes the fair market prices for these products and services, and revises the prices when appropriate. The Committee assists entities of the federal government in expanding their AbilityOne procurement, and designates one or more distributors for AbilityOne products and services.

The Committee is comprised of 15 Presidentially-appointed members, 11 of whom represent governmental agencies and four private citizens knowledgeable about the employment problems of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

(end)