



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

NOV 25 2009

Message from the Secretary of Defense

I extend my greetings to all those gathered here for the 29th Annual Department of Defense Disability Awards Ceremony. The individuals and organizations we are honoring today for their achievements deserve our utmost respect and gratitude.

Foremost, I wish to thank those who have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other theaters as many have suffered severe disabilities. We are dedicated to provide our warfighters with the best facilities and care during rehabilitation and to also provide them with ample assistance to navigate the next step in their lives and to return as working members of our national workforce. The United States Government and I are committed to providing these service members with opportunities to continue serving the Department and our Nation.

Incorporating individuals with disabilities into our civilian workforce is important to the Department of Defense. We must keep pushing for progress. It is our goal that those living with targeted disabilities make up at least two percent of the employees in our workforce.

As we work towards this goal, I want to thank all those who have dedicated themselves to the achievement of this goal. And to those working with disabilities in our workforce, I commend you for your diligent efforts on the job, supporting our service-disabled members in the field every day.

I appreciate your attendance and interest in this special event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert M. Gates".

OSD 13062-09

