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50th Anniversary of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We can all be grateful that during the past 50 years a special effort has made more employment opportunities available to blind and other severely disabled Americans. The Wagner-O'Day Act, which became law on June 25, 1938, directed Federal agencies to purchase products from sheltered workshops staffed by blind Americans. In 1971, amendments proposed by Senator Javits extended this program by including workshops employing those with severe disabilities and by expanding the role of the Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Handicapped in the administration of the program.

Today, more than 16,000 blind and other severely disabled people work in nearly 350 facilities under this program. From a modest beginning, when traditional products such as mops and brooms were produced, the program has grown to include a broad range of sophisticated goods and services.

Under this law, now known as the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, countless blind and other severely disabled Americans have received training and employment and have developed and displayed the skills and abilities to take competitive jobs outside sheltered settings and to reach their full potential and independence. Our Nation benefits from such contributions, and the Federal government benefits from the program because fine products and services are provided at fair market prices. Achievements under the program have been many, but we must continue our efforts to hire and train the majority of disabled people of working age who have not yet become employed.

We should all appreciate the wisdom and dedication of Senators Jacob Javits and Robert Wagner and of Congresswoman Caroline O'Day, by whose names this Act is known. We should also commend the efforts of the Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Handicapped, the National Industries for the Blind, and the National Industries for the Severely Handicapped, whose goals are making the wisdom of the Act a reality.

The Congress, by Senate Concurrent Resolution 121, has requested the President to issue a proclamation commemorating June 25, 1988, as the 50th Anniversary of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act on June 25, 1988. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities designed to reaffirm the Act's historical objectives of providing employment opportunities to blind and other severely handicapped Americans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of June, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan