

WASHINGTON -- Government and private sector employers may take advantage of a free resource to identify college students and recent graduates with disabilities for their summer and permanent job openings, U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao announced today. The department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in cooperation with the Department of Defense, now offers a database of more than 1,600 job seekers with disabilities through its Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP).

"WRP gives many students with disabilities the break they need to launch successful careers. They acquire valuable work experience, gain confidence, and make important job connections," Chao said. "The WRP also fulfills President Bush's *New Freedom Initiative* pledge to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the nation."

Through WRP's complimentary CD-ROM database, employers can search for potential applicants by field of study, state or school, in disciplines ranging from computer sciences and business, to communications engineering and office administration. Searches generate candidate profiles, academic and demographic data, and contact information from applications recruited by the program from more than 180 colleges and universities in over 40 states and territories. The CD-ROM and additional information are available from www.wrpjobs.com, or by contacting ODEP at (202) 693-7880.

Although this year's WRP has just started, almost 150 students have already been placed in public and private sector positions said Roy Grizzard, assistant secretary for ODEP. He said WRP applicants are valuable because they can undertake special projects postponed for lack of time or resources, assist permanent staff with key projects, share innovative technical skills, and assume responsibilities of staff on vacation or leave.

"As a former educator, I find the WRP is an important resource for employers to find an exceptional pool of talented applicants with disabilities for summer and permanent positions. Applicants are highly motivated students and recent graduates who are eager to prove their abilities in the workforce," said Grizzard.

Other resources ODEP offers to business to employ people with disabilities are the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and the Employer Assistance and Referral Network (EARN). JAN is a toll-free information and referral service on job accommodations for people with disabilities. It can be reached at 1-800-526-7234 or at www.jan.wvu.edu. EARN, a national toll-free telephone and electronic information referral service, helps employers locate and recruit qualified workers with disabilities. EARN can be reached at 1-866-Earn Now (1-866-327-6669) or via its Website (www.earnworks.com).

ODEP also encourages employers and employees to access www.DisabilityInfo.gov, a cross-government portal on disability easily accessible to all Americans.