

# U.S. Sen. Johnson: Introduces the Workplace Choice and Flexibility for Individuals with Disabilities Act

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**WASHINGTON** – On Tuesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) introduced the *Workplace Choice and Flexibility for Individuals with Disabilities Act* to increase career opportunities and informed choice in employment for individuals with disabilities. The bill clarifies that jobs like those under the AbilityOne or other similar workforce programs are considered part of the “competitive labor market” permitting state vocational rehabilitation agencies to refer individuals with disabilities to these programs’ jobs.

“I have always believed in the dignity of work and the uplifting power of being able to provide for oneself through earning a paycheck, including for individuals with disabilities who need specialized programs to obtain employment,” **Sen. Johnson said.** “I’m proud to introduce this bill that would eliminate perceived or real barriers for government agencies to refer individuals with disabilities to these workforce programs to help these individuals continue a life of fulfillment and opportunity.”

## Background

1. In 2014, Congress amended the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* via the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) to provide employment support to individuals with disabilities in entering competitive integrated employment. However, the Department of Education subsequently issued regulations that caused confusion for many state vocational rehabilitation agencies in referring individuals with disabilities to AbilityOne jobs and jobs under similar state set-aside contracts.
2. Many of these agencies issue a blanket denial approach, which deprives

individuals with disabilities from being referred to valuable employment opportunities, such as work centers to jobs in federal and state government buildings.

3. The *Workplace Choice and Flexibility for Individuals with Disabilities Act* would increase career opportunities for individuals with disabilities by clarifying that jobs like those under AbilityOne are considered part of the “competitive labor market” within the CIE standard. This would clear up the confusion for state vocational rehabilitation agencies in whether they could refer individuals with disabilities to AbilityOne jobs, creating more employment options for individuals with disabilities.