



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate President Pro Tempore Malcolm A. Smith Recognizes National Disability Employment Awareness Month

MALCOLM A. SMITH October 1, 2009

(New York) Senate President Pro Tempore Malcolm A. Smith, noting that October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, says that it is time to recognize the contributions and skills of American workers with disabilities. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is dedicated to increase awareness of working Americans who have disabilities, and the barriers that still need to be removed.

“It is very important today to bring attention to this issue because, after years of employment gains, in 2009 the number of working Americans with disabilities fell as the overall unemployment rate grew across the country,” said Senator Smith.

Though the State Senate passed legislation granting an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for New Yorkers who are out of work, the difficulties that the unemployed face is even harder for those with disabilities.

“Every single person in this country has skills and talents to contribute,” said Senator Smith. “We all benefit from removing obstacles that prevent Americans with disabilities from achieving their full potential in the workplace. A future where people with disabilities have unlimited employment opportunities is good for our economy and our society.”

The effort to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment actually began in 1945, when President Harry Truman signed a law declaring the first week in October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month."