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HARRIS INTERACTIVE SURVEY FINDS LARGEST MINORITY GROUP FALLS BEHIND IN COMPANIES' ATTEMPTS TO DIVERSIFY

Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability Call on Employers to Hire Americans with Disabilities

NEW YORK (October 5th, 2010) – A new survey sponsored by Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability (NOD) finds that although corporations recognize that hiring employees with disabilities is important, most are hiring very few of these job seekers and few are proactively making efforts to improve the employment environment. These results, from the Kessler Foundation/National Organization on Disability 2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities conducted by Harris Interactive, are especially important given the focus on employment by media and government and with October recognized as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Data released in July 2010 from an earlier study, the Kessler Foundation/NOD Survey of Americans with Disabilities, found that little progress has been made in closing the employment gap between people with and without disabilities since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. In fact, only 21 percent of people with disabilities, ages 18 to 64, reported that they are working either full or part-time, compared to 59 percent of people without disabilities.

From this latest survey, although 70 percent of corporations polled have diversity policies or programs in place, only two-thirds of those with programs include disability as a component. Only 18 percent of companies offer an education program aimed at integrating people with disabilities into the workplace. The low figures are particularly notable given that a majority of employers perceive the costs of hiring a person with a disability to be the same as hiring a person without a disability (62 percent).

“America's success in the global economy depends on how well we put to use the productive capacity of every person's talent, skill and ability. This new survey reveals that most employers are not aware of the unique contributions that workers with disabilities can make and do little to recruit them. The shockingly high unemployment rate among people with disabilities suggests that employers seeking dependable workers have a rich and ready talent pool of workers from

which to draw,” said NOD President Carol Glazer. “By following the leadership of companies like NOD partners Sam’s Club and Lowe’s, employers will see that hiring people with disabilities can expand the productive power of their workforce.”

Rodger DeRose, President & CEO of Kessler Foundation, says the survey results cannot be attributed solely to the economic climate, which is having a disproportionate effect on the disability community. Lack of awareness among employers and job seekers is also a factor.

“This is what Kessler Foundation plans to address. Our strategy is to improve these numbers by supporting employment initiatives through our grantmaking,” said DeRose. “These results show that a broader approach is required to ensure employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We need the support of government, corporations and business networks to amplify our efforts.” Both Kessler Foundation and NOD have programs in place that are helping people with disabilities find jobs.

This marks the third effort since 1986 to determine the current attitudes of corporate employers toward employees with disabilities. Kessler, NOD, and Harris Interactive designed this survey and developed the questions that provide insight into the employment environment for people with disabilities. The findings help explain why such a large gap exists between people with and without disabilities.

Among the findings:

- One in five companies (19 percent) has a specific person or department that oversees the hiring of people with disabilities. This is in contrast to 1995 when 40 percent of companies hired someone specifically for this reason.
- Only 7 percent of companies with disability programs offer a disability affinity group.
- Of the 56 percent of managers and executives who estimated what percentage of new hires in the past three years was people with disabilities, the average was 2 percent.

“These numbers are disappointing but give us deeper insight into the findings of the earlier survey,” said Humphrey Taylor, Chairman of *The Harris Poll* and member of the NOD board. “The survey released in July focused on the gaps between people living with and without disabilities across 10 different areas. That survey showed that the largest gap was employment. Much work remains to be done in order to improve these numbers. We need employers and the disability community to work together to take action on both sides.”

To review the complete survey, please visit www.2010DisabilitySurveys.org.

Survey Methodology

The 2010 Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities was conducted by phone and online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Kessler Foundation and the National Organization on Disability between March 29 and April 23, 2010 among 411 senior executives and human resource managers. The estimates of theoretical sampling error are +/- five percentage points at 95% confidence.