



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY September 30, 2009

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October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Senator Huntley: “Every person, no matter their background, can contribute to our society.”

Noting that October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, State Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) 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 the obstacles many of these workers still face.

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.

Though the New York 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. Jobs are in short supply, and often times the positions that they are in become the first casualties in these economic

times. These difficult situations can become a deterrent to those with disabilities who fear that they may not have the skills to compete in the American workforce. Yet, those with disabilities are in fact valuable to their community, and have the ability to succeed in the workplace when given the chance.

“Every single person in this country has skills and talents to contribute,” said Senator Huntley. “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."