



## **U.S. AbilityOne Commission Mourns Loss of Disability Rights Leader Judy Heumann**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 6, 2023 – The U.S. AbilityOne Commission joins the disability community in mourning the loss of Judy Heumann, a trailblazer of the disability rights movement and a key force behind some of its milestone achievements. She passed away on March 4 at the age of 75.

Heumann was pivotal to the passage of the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She was also one of the founders of the independent living movement. Internationally, she helped bring about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

A wheelchair user following a childhood bout with polio, Heumann in 1977 helped spearhead the landmark protests that led to the Federal regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act—a model for the ADA.

She went on to hold posts as an adviser, fellow or board member with institutions like Human Rights Watch, the Ford Foundation, and the World Bank, and served as the Assistant Secretary in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Education in the Clinton administration, as well as a special adviser in the Obama State Department.

“I always admired Judy’s clarity, advocacy and strength,” said Commission Chairperson Jeffrey Koses. “She was someone who fought to win full equality and inclusion for people with disabilities. She is one of the heroes.”

Commission Vice Chairperson Chai Feldblum said, “Judy’s vision will remain a true north for the disability community. As someone who worked with Judy at various points during my professional career—learned from her and laughed with her—I feel her passing as a huge loss. But we benefit incalculably from her legacy.”

The Commission is rescheduling a town hall meeting on its proposed draft compliance guidances, originally scheduled for Wednesday, March 8, to respect the memorial service for Judy Heumann that will take place that day.



## **About the U.S. AbilityOne Commission**

The AbilityOne Program is administered by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, the operating name of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The Commission is an independent Federal agency composed of 15 Presidential appointees: 11 represent Federal agencies, and four serve as private citizens who are knowledgeable about employment barriers facing people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

## **About the AbilityOne Program**

The AbilityOne Program facilitates the use of government procurement to provide employment in the United States for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. More than 36,000 individuals, including more than 2,500 veterans, are employed nationwide at more than 440 nonprofit agencies from Maine to Guam. AbilityOne provided nearly \$4 billion in products and services to approximately 40 Federal government agencies in FY 2022.

