



## AbilityOne Contracting Goal

### Issue

The AbilityOne<sup>®</sup> Program is among the nation's largest providers of jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. This program uses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from participating nonprofit agencies that train and employ workers with disabilities. Despite being one of the oldest socioeconomic programs in the United States, the program is underutilized within the federal government. A statutory goal would empower and incentivize agencies within the federal government to consider AbilityOne solutions and would create new employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities as well as veterans with disabilities. A goal would be consistent with other socioeconomic goals established by Congress that have achieved results and would increase accountability and foster greater utilization of AbilityOne products and services. While other federal socioeconomic procurement programs (Small Business; Small Disadvantaged Business; Women-Owned Small Business; Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business; and Historically Underutilized Business Zones) have grown by tens of billions of dollars over the last decade, the AbilityOne Program has remained relatively stagnant over the same period.

### Background

The federal government is the largest customer of products and services in the world. In FY 2022 the federal government purchased over \$678 billion of which only \$3.7 billion in products and services was awarded through the AbilityOne Program which represented 0.555 percent of annual expenditures. The AbilityOne Program employs more than 36,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including more than 2,500 veterans with disabilities.

Notwithstanding the Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity, established under Section 898 of the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, recommended a 1.0 percent Department of Defense-wide goal in its final report to Congress in December 2021, it is imperative that the federal government, as a whole, strive to meet the Congressional mandate. With 35 federal agencies participating in the AbilityOne Program in FY 2022, a 1.0 percent federal government-wide goal will create thousands of additional job opportunities and ensure that people with disabilities are treated fairly, with dignity, and have an opportunity to contribute to the United States economy.

Establishing a 1% AbilityOne goal would increase its share by 0.445% or \$3.0 billion. This increase would result in approximately 25,000 new jobs and raise total employment to more than 60,000 jobs annually, including nearly doubling the number of jobs for service-disabled veterans.

### Policy Recommendation

To increase employment opportunities, SourceAmerica<sup>®</sup> supports the establishment of a government-wide AbilityOne contracting goal. A 1.0 percent goal would create tens of thousands of new employment opportunities for people with disabilities and veterans with disabilities. To learn more about this issue and how it impacts people with disabilities, contact the SourceAmerica Government Affairs Department at [Advocacy@SourceAmerica.org](mailto:Advocacy@SourceAmerica.org).