

## **SECTION 501—AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY STATEMENT**

### **JULY 2001**

Over the next several years, the U.S. Department of Transportation will face a significant challenge in recruiting candidates to fill vacancies created by retirements and departures from federal service. This challenge, however, also presents an historic chance to open job opportunities at the Department to individuals who may have had difficulty accessing them in the past, including people with disabilities.

Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits Federal executive branch agencies from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities. It also requires agencies to take affirmative action in hiring, placing, and advancing people with disabilities.

As one of the authors of the Americans with Disabilities Act during my service in Congress, I am firmly committed to making the Department of Transportation a model employer in opening job opportunities and building a positive work environment for people with disabilities.

All applicants and employees have the right to be treated with respect and individuals must be recruited, hired, and promoted based upon their qualifications and experience. The Department has both an ethical and legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations that will allow applicants and employees with disabilities an equal opportunity to compete in the workplace.

The current generation of Americans with disabilities is well prepared for the job market, yet nearly one half of working age people with disabilities in the United States are unemployed. An aggressive affirmative employment program of recruiting, outreach, and employee development directed toward people with disabilities has the potential both to help the Department meet its workforce needs and to help bring Americans with disabilities into the mainstream of the Department and society as a whole.

Americans with disabilities come from all walks of life and all racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Our commitment to opening job opportunities to all Americans, including Americans with disabilities, is a reflection of our commitment to building a Department that works for, includes, and responds to the needs of all Americans.

I urge all U.S. Department of Transportation employees to join me in finding the very best means of implementing Section 501 and in working aggressively to create opportunities to recruit, hire, train, mentor, and promote persons with disabilities.

Norman Y. Mineta