

## Foreword

# Why Not Be the Best?

During every war of the last century – and more recently in peacetime – America has provided a vocational rehabilitation program to return its veterans with service-related disabilities to the national workforce.

One, because this nation has an industrial-size work ethic and two, because our culture and our self-worth put great value on individual productivity.

A paycheck determines where we live, where our children go to school, and where we play. We believe that the opportunity to work should be equitably available to all Americans, and certainly to those who have defended our nation.

Our gratitude to our disabled servicemen and women is great, and work is the best gift we can give. We can pay no greater tribute than to return them to their jobs or prepare them to enter new jobs, depending on their needs. In this country, we accommodate our co-workers' disabilities so we can harness their abilities for the good of all.

Our social policy has not always worked perfectly – disabled veterans are still on the lowest rung of the employment ladder – but we have tried and we will continue to try until we succeed.

Our world, our country, our lives changed forever on September 11, 2001. Attacked, not by nations, but by international terrorists who had lived among us, we now face a never-ending war like none we have ever known. In this new century, our enemies bear no flags, lurk in shadows, and slay the innocent.

All the rules changed on that dreadful day, disappearing like the smoke that drifted away from two tall towers, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania countryside. But we will adapt and do as we have always done – we will fight for freedom for ourselves and for others as we are doing in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For the disabled warriors of this century, and for those who fought before, we must shore up our veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program. Why not build on its strengths, learn from its failures, and make it the best it can be?

To serve those who serve us, we must make the commitment and bear the price because *what they give up* is greater and *what they give us* is priceless.