

Competing for Jobs that Didn't Exist 10 Years Ago

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>> Welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio where every week we explore issues, ideas, initiatives and innovations involving the employment of people with disabilities. We feature employers that go beyond compliance in supporting people with disabilities in the workplace and elsewhere. We bring you prominent members of the business community, service providers, government officials, researchers, educators and people who successfully manage their disability and careers. Join us now for Disabilities At Work.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hello. I'm Ray Zardetto and welcome to this

week's Disabilities At Work Radio program here on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. Each week at noon Eastern Time Disabilities At Work Radio explores the issues, ideas, and initiatives involving the workplace and people with disabilities and discusses them with prominent members of the business, government and disability communities.

Disabilities At Work Radio is brought to you this week by the -- two distinguished organizations actually, both dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled; the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services.

Now, on today's program, we are going to focus on education and career planning, the preparations phases, if you will, for entering the workforce. And later in the program to help us with this discussion we are going to be joined by Kathy Martinez who heads the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, and also by Andy Imperato, the president of the American Association of People with Disabilities.

But we are happy to open the program today with a guest who may have, well, maybe some different perspectives about education and training, especially as it pertains to be with disabilities. He is Rob Crawford, the chief executive officer of the Life Development Institute of School and Business Enterprise that is based in Glendale, Arizona. So welcome to

the program, Rob. Thanks for joining us.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Thanks so much for the invite.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Great to have you with us. Why don't you tell us, first, about exactly what the Life Development Institute is?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Well, the Life Development Institute is a private organization located in Glendale, Arizona, that serves young men and women between the age of 18 and 30 that primarily have the higher incidence, uh, non apparent types of disabilities, learning disabilities, ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, anxiety issues. Um, we work in a functional strength based approach. It really is not a disability based approach; it's a functional pragmatic thing that takes into consideration what does the typical young adult going out on their own for the first time need to know how to do to be able to take care of themselves and function in society.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And when you say, um, that you take this approach, how do you think this is different from what might have been more traditional approaches?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I think traditional approaches, especially as they are set up now, are looking more at traditional content based academics and trying to assess outcomes that indicate that people are improving and increasing their ability to do core academic course work.

The thing that makes us different and what I have spent

28 years of my professional life waiting and working towards is the embedding of traditional academics, which is the learning to know the theory with the learning to do, the application, the experience. Because outside of halls of academia, the only place where you have a question for a problem in life or at work that has one right answer is school. In the real world everyone else has a multiple assortment of answers and range of responses they can have to a typical issue of a dissatisfied customer. Do I hit them over the head with my keyboard or do a call for management?

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I don't see where we are doing any -- I'm not seeing the linking of those two pieces in either the secondary or the higher education systems.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah, as a matter of fact, I wanted to ask you about that. I mean, just based on what you have described here in your first couple of answers, um, do you sense or do you see then there is a gap between what is being taught in high schools and say colleges and what the skills are that businesses need for people as they come into the workforce? I suppose that question, first, is general for all the population and then particularly for people with disabilities.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Well, you are absolutely right on the second point and I'll provide the listeners some emerging research and studies on that that really speak to the holistic aspect of

adults who are 18 to 30 and what is going on with them.

Of course, what these studies neglected to do is look at people with disabilities. And there is other work done by the National Longitudinal Transition Study, the second round of this that takes a look at five key areas that pertain to what we define as being an adult. And I think we are in a period of time here where we are going to have to redefine what growing up in America means and what it means to be an adult.

And, more specifically to that point, it's not so much a matter of core competencies in academics, it's what the business community would refer to as the soft skills, the ability to communicate to a number of different people, the ability to choose from multiple choices, work with people in teams, communicate around that.

In corporate America, the business community spends hundreds of billions of dollars every year in those skills because they are not getting that from people that are coming into the workplace.

So the idea, I think, I hear it in terms of this show and one of my points would be if we are doing something that would be, I guess, in another show that would be called universal design and we are taking a look at what does it mean to be a functioning member of society? What have we traditionally looked at?

Both the McArthur Foundation as a network on transition

to adulthood and then some research at Princeton University is taking a look at what they call the long and twisting path to adulthood. And those five area areas that would be much greater eased to the transition from school, whether you are in special ed or regular ed, whatever your academic setting is and going into the adult community should really be addressing in tandem with the traditional academic measures the ability to live in the community, to be independent, finish school, be able to obtain employment, and do these things, get married and have a family, and do these things with an informed decision making process. And probably more than anything else that's what is missing, a process that links these pieces together.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And where do you think this process would have to come from?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Well, I think that, uh, through all of our reform efforts, most recently with No Child Left Behind and the explosion of charter schools and a range of options. Arizona is a state that considers itself a leading innovator in school choice options. Uh, what is missing in all of these efforts to get higher grades and get them that top five of international competition with our, our assessments has been taking a look at how can we prepare somebody for that next step.

And the next step is already being and has been looked at for many, many years in special education through the transition planning component. Those five areas have been

measured and evaluated and instructed and hundreds of millions of dollars of grant monies have been devoted to that. So there is a body of research and practice that is already out there that is being completely ignored.

The business community to the Department of Labor almost thirty years ago took a look at how America was falling behind Asian countries and Europe and that is where the genesis of the whole education reform movement came from was when the first President Bush was in office and Bill Clinton was the head of the Governor's Association. That is where all of this standard stuff that we see today, that is the genesis of it.

Unfortunately, when they went to the Department of Labor and the business community and the business community said here is what we need of school, it was never implemented. It's very complicated to do it, it takes a lot of coordination and, you know, you got a lot of kingdoms out there that would be under threat by that.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. If you had a point to, you know, the single one or most influential reason why, you know, no action was taken on it, it wasn't acted on it, would it be that? Would it be territoriality?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: That certainly is a part of it. You have got a five [inaudible] set up at every level of an organization; it doesn't matter if its education or UPS, it makes no difference. There are things that are sacred and things that you don't mess

with.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: The ability to find common ground within those areas probably could best be facilitated with more local options through an RSP process to contractors and vendors at the local level because the state and the federal organizations are just much too large to provide either individualized or scalable operations that can address what we are talking.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. So when I opened the program I said I thought you were a guest who might have some different perspectives about education and training. And I think about what some of that stuff would be, would it be fair to say that, um, you may not be someone who subscribes to some of the more commonly held beliefs about going to a good school and getting, you know, a good education from the schools, scoring well on state assessment tests, is not necessarily a ticket to success once you get out of school.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: No. Both here in our local paper through the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center, uh, and the Wall Street Journal recently both had articles on, and the LA Times, had articles on, is getting a college degree really worth it?

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: I listened in to some earlier shows and there was somebody from the New Jersey Chamber that was talking

about how a very, very high percentage of even entry level jobs require some kind of postsecondary training or education.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yep.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Yet these reports that I'm citing to you use the Department of Labor's own dictionary of occupational titles and Bureau of Labor Statistics to say the top ten growth jobs, none of them will require even a high school education. So there is a disconnect between collection of data and analyzing it and publishing it and what is actually going on on the ground is much more complicated.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Good. I think this is probably a good point to take a break in our conversation. When we come back, Rob, we can talk a little bit about, you know, what LDI does with, the Life Development Institute does, to start to address some of these issues and concerns you brought up. We can talk about some of the specifics of that.

And then, as I mentioned earlier, Kathy Martinez and Andy Imperato will join Rob and me to talk about a number of things, including the important and unique event recently held in Phoenix called the Employability Rally. Uh, very interesting. We will talk that a little bit too. So stay with us, I'm Ray Zardetto, this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. And, again, this week's show is brought to you by the Kessler Foundation and the State of New Jersey's Division of Disabilities Services.

I'm Ray Zardetto, and I'm speaking with Rob Crawford, CEO of the Life Development Institute. And, Rob, why don't we expand the conversation a little bit now to talk more about specific career planning, especially as you envision it at your Life Development Institute?

Why don't you take us through some of the things you try and do where you try and work with your people there to do?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: First of all, let me just share with the audience, I'm into disclosure, I'm a 56-year-old man with mild learning disabilities and severe ADHD. Not the kind where I'm bouncing off the walls, but the kind that looks like I'm not paying attention to you. The issue is I pay attention to everything.

So 28 years ago when I started this company out of my house, uh, I just looked at it from the standpoint of what decisions do I have to make to not only be able to find an employer, but the right employer and one where I might be able to stick around for a while.

In my earlier years, I had been terminated from thirty

jobs, so I was an expert at getting them and an expert at leaving them. So trying to take that and distill that into a younger version of me, if you will, younger adults with these same conditions, what is it that's there, what is it that is missing? What we feel is extremely important to successful career planning is the ability to, first of all, have a values clarification framed in the question of what matters most to you. And if you can figure that out in terms of life, it's the short hop over to, well, how can you achieve that in a career or job and find an employer that embraces those values?

So we -- what I don't see, and it's hard too, when you live in, you know, you are just coming to a college class or a high school program and you are young and you don't think this is ever go to happen, it's difficult to get people's attention to do that, but it's the most important step is to get them clear on what is going to keep them going after they learn the job like the back of their hand.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: And you can do these kinds of things in any classroom. What is missing and what I'd like to see a lot more of is, is linking that classroom and traditional assessments, vocational assessments or psycho educational diagnostics to fieldwork and field experience. Putting a student in front of three or four different employers, preparing questions in advance, and asking the same questions of each employer and

then comparing the responses of that relative to that values clarification that you have.

I don't know anybody that takes the time to do that, to teach a person what is involved in the risk reward analysis of making a decision that has some fear to it. It might not work. It's unknown. I don't see anywhere outside of isolated examples for math problems or other things in mainstream academia to where we are really sitting down and finding common sense approaches to things that don't have black or white answers. In other words, what we have to face in life and work every single day and then relating those requirements of that environment back to what you know about yourself.

It's a three-part process. You have got to get to know yourself and appreciate what you can do and realize what you aren't able to do yet, uh, that might be the disclosure of the disability part. What does it mean, what doesn't it mean that's not global? So what specifically does it mean? And then the second part is getting out in the field and meeting other people and getting that field experience.

Both research reports that I cited to you stated over and over again that it is the lack of outside contacts beyond the family that is a limiting factor of all adults today 18 to 30. It takes them, in both disabled and non-disabled groups that I compared, it's taking them almost the same amount of time to achieve the same milestones. The only one that is

different is a higher graduation rate for people that don't have disabilities. But getting married, working, moving out, all of these things are almost identical between to the groups. Go ahead.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: No -- I was going to say if you have another point to make, go ahead. I wanted to change the focus a little bit and talk about it from the business point of view, but if you have another point to make first, go ahead.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: The only thing I'd make, finally is learning how to make the contribution into the community and that means that when you have a student or a prospective employee that is thinking about a career, that they are going into the actual environment that they are going to have to spend every day and figuring out what that culture is about, how do they do work? How are things communicated? How long am I going to get training? What is the training going to be like?

In other words, they are assessing the requirements of a specific environment and then looking at what they have in terms of abilities or some obstacles due to a learning disability or another neurological condition.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. And from the business point of view though, how do we address the challenge when we talk about some of the disabilities that you have specifically talked about here, whether it's ADHD or Asperger's or an anxiety condition or something? As you call them, they are sort of, um, what you

would call hidden disabilities.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: They are. They are non apparent, non visible, hidden, depending on whatever term you want to use, the issue is it's a functional barrier between where you are and where you want to be. How do you mitigate those effects in a cost effective manner where you can retain an otherwise qualified staff person?

I think first of all you have deal with the issue of disclosure, people that are like me that are working for another company and trying move up the line. If I wanted to be a partner in a law firm I probably wouldn't get a lot of attraction if I was competing against fifteen other people if I disclosed that I had learning disabilities.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Even if I have done great work up until that point, now there is a question if can I handle the bigger case.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: That's on the business side. On the individual side, business probably needs to understand that many people like this either aren't going to push and disclose or they don't know how to do it effectively and appropriately.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. And I think that is part of the challenge I was getting at. I mean, what are the things you do or what are the things that you suggest can be done relative to businesses when it comes to the disclosure issue? How do we

get around some of these, you know, these attitudes about learning disabilities and the people who have them?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Well that really is what it is. It's a frame of mind that captures an image, whether it's stereotypical or bias, but it's got this image of what this person with this label or condition is supposed to be about and is exclusive of all of the things that characterize them as perhaps a valued employee. I won't even get into the mushy human side of stuff; just make this a straight line business proposition.

Your Marriott Corporation, you got a hot dog maker at Washington National that you have paid about \$3,500 out-of-pocket before they have even punched in for the first time just in processing their paperwork and getting them set up and all of those things. It would seem to me that an employer would want to retain someone that they like that was otherwise qualified before they found out.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I don't think that -- if I was going to challenge the business community on this, I'd want to see people that are at the C-level, chief operating officers, chief executive officers that openly disclose that they have disabilities and provide a mentoring situation like other recognized minority groups have for female bosses or sexual orientation or any of the other things that we see and acknowledge as regular situations that occur in a diverse

workplace. But that has not happened.

I have other ideas too. I'd love to see, uh, early stage venture capital fund for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: And have RFP's at the local level as I mentioned before to create a vendor network of, I think, the rehabilitation industry does a good job of hiring and educating and promoting people that have had chemical dependency or substance abuse issues because they know what the issues are. They are the ones that have been dealing with it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm wondering also, a lot of the corporations, including many of which, many of whom have been on this program or spokespersons have been on this program, talk about employee resource groups that they have. One of which is always one focused on people with disabilities. I wonder if you think, do you find those to be effective platforms?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I think, again, it all depends on how they are set up. Most companies, and there are notable exceptions, Diversity Inc. has a top ten employers who are, you know, the best places to go to work and practices for people with disabilities.

The top companies are not quite there yet, but they are working on embedding disability as part of the corporate's brand and that they are using it for all of their strategies,

whether they are located here nationally or they are a global corporation. And when you start cutting across different nationalities and different cultural sensitivities, I can appreciate how complicated it is for larger corporations, but it still starts with just understanding the basic aspects that I'm a person with a disability.

So I have got skills and abilities, I only applied for this job because I meet the position requirements and if I was three months pregnant you probably would want to know that or if I got pregnant after I came, we naturally accommodate other people without even thinking about it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: There has got to be that gap closed to where it's okay internally to hire people and people are right out front and very visible about what their culture is all about and you can see that people are being promoted who are obviously people that have disabilities, not to meet any EOC quota, but because they are the best candidate for the job. And we are not in that world yet, we are not, I would call it a post disabled world. We still use dislabeling. We have the wrong terms for what we are calling disabilities. So it's a dislabeling issue.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. I have got about a minute left for this segment, but I did want to address just one other question. If I heard you correctly early on in describing your

work at the Institute, is most of your work, you said, focused on students, uh, from the age of 18 and up to about 30?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: That's correct. We are a regional accrediting body for our local high school program as a north central association. We are approved through the Department of Homeland Security to issue M-1 Visas for foreign students.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: We are approved through the Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program as a non college program. We are pretty non-sectarian as far as where people come from. We are just want them to want what everyone else does.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: We want what everyone else does.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: The one question I want to squeeze in about that , I was wondering if you ever considered whether you should try and tackle some of these issues before the students reach 18, when they are 15, 16, some of the more developmental years?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I'd say 12. I'd like to start seeing -- I mean, when is it too young to start being responsible? Really, that's what we are talking about is learning how and desiring to be a responsible person, first to yourself and then to others. I think we have to start it earlier than we are now because we are not getting the job done now.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Good. Well it's time for us to take another break. When we return, Rob and I will be joined by Kathy Martinez and Andy Imparato to talk about the recent Employability Rally I mentioned in the last segment and also to talk a little bit about policy priorities for people with disabilities at the Department of Labor.

And before we go into this break, let me invite all of you listening to Disabilities At Work Radio to join our team at DisabilitiesAt and also friend us on Facebook at Disabilities At Work. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: We are back on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. This is Disabilities At Work Radio and I'm Ray Zardetto. And today's show is sponsored by the Kessler

Foundation which is dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled and it does so through rehabilitation research done by the Kessler Foundation Research Center and through the work of the Kessler Program Center which prepares the disabled for the demands of the workplace. For more information please visit www.kesslerinstitute.org.

Also sponsoring our show today is the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services, part of the state's Division of Human Services. The division focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live more independently in their communities. And Disabilities At Work Radio thanks both the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services for their consideration in sponsoring this week's show.

And now I'd like to welcome another guest to our program, Kathy Martinez. Kathy is the assistant secretary, also with Disabilities Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. Kathy, welcome, and thank you for joining us.

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Well, I'm delighted to be here, thank you for having me.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you for being with us. We were going to have Andy Imparato also join us. He is the president of the American Association of People with Disabilities, but we are having some technical difficulties connecting with Andy and we hope we can get him on the program at our next break and before

we are done.

But in the meantime, we will continue on with Kathy and with Rob, and I wanted to focus now on October 28th, 2010, when in Phoenix, Arizona, there was a very unique and very important event called an Employability Rally and our guests took in this. Rob, make you can just give us a quick rundown of exactly what the Employability Rally was?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: The inception of the idea came in a run up to the 2008 presidential election during the primaries when both - the candidates from both parties were thanking their constituencies and my wife and I were waiting to hear about some recognition for people with disabilities being a voting block or a recognized constituency, and, of course, that did not happen.

And we were looking for some positive way in light of all of the financial meltdown and everything and all the other uncertainty that was going on, a positive way to harness different elements of the community who normally don't get together with each other. Within disabilities, specific disabilities themselves, there is not a lot of cross pollenization of efforts between are groups.

So we wanted the business community, we wanted all disability groups, other recognized minorities with full civil rights protections to be able to come together and publicly claim the disability and have a celebration, because we have

never come out together and had a celebration that was dedicated to updating public perceptions and attitudes towards the capabilities of people with disabilities.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And so that's what we saw in Phoenix on October 28th?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Right. We didn't get into healthcare reform or any of the other stuff that is much more complicated than what this show was about. We focused only on what happens to a person when they become employed. And there are many successful people with disabilities of which Assistant Secretary Martinez and the other people that presented were all examples of that, publicly disclosing and successful in life, career, et cetera. We wanted to show that face.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And Kathy, I know that you were one of the key note speakers at the rally. I was wondering if you might share with us some of the main points you made to the attendees at the event.

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Well, first of all, I talked about the value of employment, the value of having a place to go every day, the value of feeling, um, like you are a contributing member of a team, the value of being recognized, the value of kind of leaving a mark on a project or an initiative or policy or a construction project or any kind of effort. Um, and I talked about, you know, about how people with disabilities have the right to be employed. Um, it's a human right to be able to

feel productive and have the opportunity to contribute.

Um, we also talked about some of the initiatives that the Department of Labor is doing and how the Department of Labor is one example of a government agency or government department that is leading the way to take people with disabilities off the special shelf and really include us into the fabric of the whole department as a respected voice, not as, you know, a marginalized population or a population that, you know, gets occasional recognition. But Secretary Solis has really made it a point to include disability at every step of, you know, the agency's work in every aspect of the work of the agency and the department.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. And I'd like it talk about some of those policy priorities in a minute, but just to stay with the event for a moment. I was wondering if either one of you might be able to characterize the attendance at the event in terms of not just how many people were there, but would you say that the preponderance of people there were people with disabilities or was it more of a mix?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I think it was a good mix. We wanted to show that even in down times that people were willing to step forward with their time and donate money. So we had a combination of employers, healthcare organizations that do employment related services, people with disabilities. I thought it was a great mix of people, a really good blueprint

for similar events to take place around the country.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: In fact, that's what I was going to ask, are you planning or do you know of any similar events that will be taking place like that in other parts of the country soon?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: I'm not aware of any. Kathy, are you aware of any?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Just for the record, folks, I'm having a very hard time hearing Rob. He fades out about every third word.

I know that in July for the anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, Chicago has a disability pride parade. And while it's not directly -- it's not only focusing on employment, that is one annual activity that we can all count on where folks with disabilities and our allies and our friends and families get together to celebrate disability pride.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And when will that be again?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: That is usually around, sometime around the Americans with Disabilities Act anniversary, which is July 26th.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. So that will be something to look forward to then in 2011.

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: It's in Chicago, in the middle of the country, easy to get to.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. Good. As long as, Kathy, we are talking this now, you mentioned a couple of minutes ago about

discussing some of the policies and I was wondering, in terms of your office and everything, what do you see as the top policy priorities for your office at this point?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Well, we have quite a few actually, but one of the main ones is we are working with our sister agency, the Office of Personnel Management, to help deploy the executive order, um, that the president established July 26th of this year, which requires the federal government to hire -- I can't say requires, but he is encouraging the federal government to hire 100,000 people with disabilities, uh, within the next five years.

And both the Department of Labor and the Office of Personnel Management are working hard to assist the chief human capital officers hiring managers and, um, just the HR folks in general to hire folks with disabilities. We have just recently released a guidance which provides hiring managers and, um, chief human capital officers with information about how to recruit, hire, promote, and retain and promote people with disabilities.

The number of people with disabilities in the government, um, has decreased, which was very unfortunate, while the numbers for other minorities has increased, especially those of us with targeted disabilities, which are considered the most significant disabilities.

So, um, it's really a government wide effort. I think

many people from the heads of the department all the way to the disability hiring managers and human resource folks are taking this very seriously. I know in the Department of Labor we are, so that's one initiative.

Also, we are looking at modernizing the section 503 regulation. Section 503 is part of the Rehabilitation Act which says that the federal contractors must make efforts to hire people with disabilities. Now this law is close to 33 years old, the regs came out in 1977, and there isn't really, um, much improvement in the number of people with disabilities working for federal contractors.

And I don't know if your audience knows this, but federal contractors employ 22 percent of the American public. So that's a big chunk of our workforce. And our goal is to bring disability more on the par with race and gender, um, regarding affirmative action. And, um, you know, we are looking at having agency or company set goals and benchmarks with regard to hiring folks with disabilities.

We also have another initiative where we are - we have four grants in the states of -- located in the states of Connecticut, Missouri, Oklahoma and California, and they are part of an initiative called adafin (phonetic), where the goal of this initiative is to increase the capacity of minority owned businesses to hire folks with disabilities.

Many times people want to, they become injured on a job

and they want to work still, they still want to work within their culture and there is just not the consciousness now in many minority businesses around hiring folks with disabilities, um, and so we want to change that. We know that minority owned businesses are being started all of the time. They are usually businesses that are comprised of less than 15 employees. And they often are counseled that they do not have to hire folks with disabilities because they are -- because they are technically not covered by the ADA under Title One.

But we are saying, you know, in our communities, in minority communities the incidences of disabilities is higher, seems to be higher for lots of different reasons, and we would just like to, you know, to kind of bring the message to folks in the minority business community that hiring people with disabilities is -- we make a business case and we know that, you know, it's an untapped pull of the labor force, um, that would increase and improve the bottom lines of their businesses.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we have to take a break again in a few seconds, Kathy, but just to go back to one of the things you said. I was curious in the first policy priority you talked about with regard to government workers, is there a reason why that you know of why the number of people with disabilities in the government, why that number has decreased?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: I think there are lots of different

reasons. Technology has taken the place of a lot of workers. And I think, you know, I think there hasn't been as much of an effort. I don't really know all of the reasons, but I know it has decreased and our goal is to really change that.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Very good. Alright. We have more to talk about and hopefully Andy Imperato will join us when we come back for our fourth and final segment of today's show. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio and remember that Disabilities At Work Radio can be heard every Wednesday at noon Eastern Time on VoiceAmerica's Business Network.

We have been talking about a number of issues around career planning, education, workforce readiness and policy with Rob Crawford of the Life Development Institute, and Kathy Martinez who heads the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. And I'm happy to say that we have now connected with Andy Imperato of the American

Association of People with Disabilities. I'm now happy to say I can welcome him to the program. Hi, Andy.

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Hi. Good to be with you.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thanks for joining us. Um, in the last segment we talked a bit about the Employability Rally and I just wanted to go back to that, circle back to you for a moment with that because I know that you were very, very heavily involved in that program. And Rob gave a quick description of what it was and what happened. I wanted to get your perspective on it in terms of what you thought was maybe the most important thing about it and, you know, what came out of it.

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Well, you know, first, I just want to give Rob Crawford and his wife Veronica credit for all the work they did in putting it together and having the vision for it.

From my perspective, you know, this year being the 20th anniversary of our civil rights lobby of the Americans With Disabilities Act, it's an opportunity to really look at why has it been twenty years of civil rights and why haven't our employment numbers gone up as a community. Based on all of the data that we have, we seem to be flat; we have flat employment numbers over twenty years.

And the rally, to me, was an opportunity to call attention to that in front of the state capital and really try to make it, you know, a visible issue that affects lots of

Americans. You know, I think Rob's vision was to have it be a civil rights issue, to have it cosponsored by civil rights organizations that were not focused on disability, and to have a diverse group of speakers that could put a human face on the issue. And I really think he accomplished it.

As I said at the rally, I think it's the kind of thing I would like to see happening in state capitals all over the country because it's really -- we want to fix the employment numbers for people with disabilities, we need state governments working with the federal government to create better policies and we need people with disabilities speaking up and saying we want to work and we are no longer willing to sit, you know, on the sidelines outside of the mainstream of the economy.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Great. Thanks. I was just wondering, I also asked Kathy and Rob this, are you familiar or are you aware of any similar kinds of rallies as what took place in Phoenix planned for any other cities in the near future?

>> ANDY IMPARATO: You know, I'm not, but as I said when I was in Phoenix, I think it's very worthy of trying to replicate in other markets. We have got a lot of focus on employment in Chicago. Kathy and I were just in Chicago at a great event that the Chicago Community Trust put on. So I think Chicago would be a good candidate. And, again, I think there is a number of, particularly state capitals, around the country that would benefit from having a similar event.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Fair enough. I'd like to talk -- turn for a minute to the American with Disabilities Act. We have talked about that, at least that has come up a couple of times on the program. And Kathy, if I could ask you this first, I don't think anybody would argue the fact that that legislation did move the ball forward in a number of ways, but, you know, where do you think there were gaps in it? What do you think is the one major thing that the ADA didn't cover that we should really look at and focus on now?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Well, I mean, the ADA covers a lot. There are five titles just chock full of, of legislative change, but what you can't legislate is attitude. And I think, you know, where we are the weakest is in the area of employment.

The ADA did a great job in changing the physical face of society. You notice ramps, you notice lifts on buses, you notice even some subsequent rulings by the Justice Department or actually they have their MPRM out which is looking at the internet, you know, being accessible. And, of course, the internet was not here when the ADA was passed. I think the ADA did make some significant changes.

Where we still need to work is in the area of employment and, of course, we can develop regulations. I mentioned the 503 regulation, the possibility of those having a great impact on increasing employment outcomes of folks with disabilities.

So we are working on that and, um, you know, I really

think -- sorry, we are having a little interruption here. I think that the ADA is a very strong law, especially as it has been amended very recently.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Rob or Andy, any perspectives from either of you with regard to that question?

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Well I'm happy to just say what I said when I was at the rally in Phoenix. I think our big challenge in disability policy, which is not really an ADA issue, is that most of the money that we spent to support people with disabilities flows through programs that were designed before the ADA and that have lower expectations for people with disabilities. And I'm talking about social security, disability insurance, supplemental security income, Medicaid and Medicare.

You know, we still require 18-year-olds with disabilities to swear to the government that they are unable to work in order for them to get the healthcare and long-term services and supports that they need. And that's just bad policy.

So, you know, the ADA guarantees equal opportunity, but we have other policies around the ADA that need to be modernized and aligned with the ADA so that, you know, we are investing in people and we are helping them work to their full potential and we are not kind of replicating low expectations that existed when a lot of these programs were created.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Rob?

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Tagging on to what Andy and Kathy are saying, there has to be a consideration of the manner of condition and duration of different disabilities. Because they are not all and homogeneous, they are different in how they impact each person's functional abilities and functional limitations.

If there is ever going to be a chance for people with disabilities to have a high standard of living that we are aspiring to, one thing for sure, whether it's the Department of Labor or the Department of Education, Commerce, you name it, that's involved in employment, we got to remember that Google, Facebook and Twitter didn't exist ten years ago. So the people that are in the system now are going to be competing for jobs that didn't exist ten years ago and there will be a bunch of jobs that don't even exist ten years from now.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: So much like Andy said, the legislation in some ways has to catch up with the technology.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: You know, Andy made a point at the rally, it's a pertinent one. Four hundred forty billion dollars a year spent on entitlements. One billion dollars for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. I'd take just one percent of that entitlement and roll it into direct services so that you have people that are able to work and contribute and will show up instead of being the occasional person that is a wheelchair user or someone that has a non apparent disability.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: It's a long ways to go before it's going to be easier for a person with mental illness to get a job than a convicted felon coming out of prison.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm. Let's turn for a minute to another comment that Kathy made when she was talking about the ADA. You know, you can provide policy, you can create as much legislation as you want, but she also mentioned the fact that in some ways now it comes down to perception within the business community, business executives, whoever, whose decision it is to hire these people.

Um, how do you go about changing the perceptions that many of them probably still have with regard to, you know, the challenges or, you know, the accommodations they might have to consider in hiring people with disabilities? How do you go about tackling that and Kathy maybe we can start with you on that one too.

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: I'm not sure you can change perception, but you can certainly regulate or legislate which will oblige people to act. And you can, you know, you can sort of, um -- we want action, really. We can't tell the people what to think, but we can move them toward action. And if for those of you who watch Mad Men, you know that not too long ago women were faced with similar types of stereotypical, uh, you know, we had to face stereotypes and misinformation, the same with

folks of color, and people with disabilities are still, you know, are still facing that.

And so I think with efforts like modernizing the 503 regulations, um, the ADA Amendments Act, the 503 regs. I think if we could bring, um, disability up to the par of race and gender, um, there would be a huge change in hiring folks with disabilities.

It would not mean only increased numbers of people with disabilities in the workforce, but it would also drive things like the invention, you know, and the adoption of new technologies. You know, when do we develop accessibility into technology and when do we, you know, when do we develop assistive technology?

So, I think things like affirmative action regulation, even though they are very controversial, really have changed the face of the workforce.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And just one quick other question for you, Kathy, because of, um, your position and where you are in Washington there, how far do you think we are from some of these additional regulations or changes that you were just describing?

>> KATHY MARTINEZ: Well, we had an advance notice of proposed rulemaking come out in July and we got 200 comments. We expect to have a notice of proposed rulemaking come out sometime in the late winter, early spring, and, um, after that the comments

will definitely, uh, drive the timeline for the regulations.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Very good. Okay. Andy, because you did join us a little later than we originally planned, let me give you a minute to just tell us about the -- your association and how people can get in touch with it if they have some more questions or want some more information about what you do.

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Sure. Thank you. The American Association of People with Disabilities is a national membership organization. The web is AAPD.com.

And the mission is to organize the disability community defined broadly so that we have more power politically, socially and economically. So we are similar to groups like the NAACP or the National Organization for Women.

You know, we have got programs like summer internships for college students where we bring folks to Washington during the summer. Some of them work on the Hill for members of Congress. Some of them work in the executive branch doing IT jobs. We have a national program called Disability Mentoring Day, which is a job shadow program where students and job seekers with disabilities spend a day with somebody who is working in a career that interests them, and that usually happens in October.

And then we do a lot of public policy advocacy and coalition work. So it's really designed to bring together all of the different elements of the disability community so that

we have more clout, um, both as a voting block and as a market.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Strength in numbers, right?

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Exactly.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. And that's the American Association of People With Disabilities. And, Rob, I know you and I spent the first couple of segments of the show talking about your Life Development Institute, let me give you a few seconds to tell the folks where they can get more information about that.

>> ROB CRAWFORD: Our website is www.lifedevelopmentinstitute.org. That is cross linked in with a blog that I write about the same issues that we are discussing on this show and a great place to exchange ideas and I invite people to write in if they'd like to know more information, specifically the contact information on the research studies that I cited or similar information. I'm happy to respond to those.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Great. Well, I want to thank my guests today, Rob Crawford, Kathy Martinez and Andy Imparato. I thought this was a great discussion, enlightening and just very interesting.

I also want to thank this week's sponsors, the Kessler Foundation and the New York Division of Disabilities Services.

And remember next Wednesday at Noon Eastern Time we will be back with another show exploring the ideas, innovations and initiatives involving the workplace and people with

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