

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today received the Tony Coelho Award for his work toward expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities.

“I am honored to receive this distinguished award,” Hoyer said. “This July, it will be 16 years since the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law. Over the years, there is no question that the ADA has ushered in significant change, and we can be proud of its accomplishments. However, one area that has not improved enough is employment.”

Hoyer noted that only thirty-two percent of people of working age who have a disability are employed. As a result, three times as many individuals with disabilities live in poverty as those without. “I want to applaud the many private individuals and business leaders who have worked so hard to reverse these disturbing trends,” Hoyer said.

Hoyer said he remains steadfast in his commitment to fulfilling the promise of the ADA and expanding opportunities wherever possible. “With thousands of severely injured soldiers returning home from Iraq, we have a special responsibility to assure that they will receive fair treatment as they attempt to return to work and re-integrate themselves into our communities,” he said.

Hoyer expressed disappointment about the Bush administration’s lack of commitment to improving the employment picture for people with disabilities. President Bush has proposed to cut funding for the Office of Disability Employment Policy by 57% since FY 2005, and the EEOC has documented troubling statistics about the number of people with disabilities in the federal workforce. “Despite all the talk by President Bush about his ‘New Freedom Initiative,’ the reality is that we are losing ground in our national commitment to developing and implementing strategies for employing people with disabilities.”

“There is clearly still much work that remains to be done,” Hoyer added. “I want to assure my good friends in this fight that I remain committed to this important cause.”

The Tony Coelho Award was started by Joyce A. Bender, CEO of Bender Consulting Services, Inc., in 2001 to recognize The Honorable Tony Coelho for a life of work enabling people with disabilities to gain competitive employment. As a former Congressman and author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Coelho went on to serve as Chairman of The President’s

Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities for eight years.

###