

US Business Leadership Network Applauds First Lady Michelle Obama's "Call to Service"

For Immediate Release
June 24, 2009

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WASHINGTON, DC (June 24, 2009) - The **US Business Leadership Network** (USBLN®) today applauded **First Lady Michelle Obama's** "Call to Service" to promote volunteerism and community service, which she delivered yesterday while speaking in California. The First Lady's speech kicked-off the Corporation for National & Community Service's (CNCS) "Service Initiative" designed to bolster civic engagement nationwide.

The Service Initiative will empower Americans to participate in the economic recovery by 1) promoting clean energy, energy efficiency and land restoration; 2) supporting education and literacy; 3) increasing health care access, public health awareness, and prevention; and 4) providing community renewal to areas hardest hit by the economic crisis. The USBLN® is among several national organizations who were asked to engage volunteers with disabilities.

"This, more than anything, is the key point I want to make today - that this new Administration doesn't view service as separate from our national priorities, or in addition to our national priorities - we see it as the key to achieving our national priorities. We believe that the only way to build that new foundation for our economy is to establish a new role for service in this country," First Lady Obama said yesterday.

The First Lady announced the launch of **United We Serve**, a sustained effort to expand the size and impact of volunteer efforts in America. The initial phase of United We Serve runs for 81 days through a new National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11. More than a dozen members of President Obama's Cabinet participated in the kick-off by fanning out across the country to join in service projects.

In her remarks, Mrs. Obama announced an initiative of the Entertainment Industry Foundation that will carry the service message to millions of Americans. During the week of October 19, plots and themes of dozens of popular network television programs will center on volunteering to inspire Americans to serve.

"The idea is to emphasize for viewers across the country that service is a part of who we are as Americans - and to highlight the power of service to make a difference in people's lives," Mrs. Obama said.

As one of the new non-traditional partners, the USBLN® has encouraged its 55 BLN Affiliates and 37 founding corporate members to harness their collective influence, expertise and commitment to diversity by engaging people with disabilities into the Service Initiative. Additional information can be obtained online at <http://www.serve.gov>.

The USBLN® is the only national business organization currently representing 55 BLN Affiliates in 32 states - including the District of Columbia - and more than 5000 employers using a "business to business" strategy to promote the business imperative of including people with disabilities in the workforce, marketplace and supplier programs.

For additional information about the USBLN® and its involvement in the Service Initiative, please contact Brandon M. Macsata by email at info@usbln.org.