



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

Message from the Secretary of Defense

Welcome to the 35th Annual Department of Defense Disability Awards Ceremony. As we observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month, I extend my greetings to all those gathered today. Today, we honor the dedication, determination, and leadership of individuals with disabilities who continue to epitomize our core values and support the Department of Defense mission with their many talents. Each of them strengthens our Total Force.

This year, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This landmark event in our Nation's history established a clear and comprehensive national mandate to empower those with disabilities through equal opportunity and full inclusion in the workplace and in all sectors of society. Its passage paved the way for millions of Americans with disabilities to fully participate in the workforce and across their communities. Twenty-five years later, the Department remains steadfast in its commitment to be a model employer of individuals with disabilities. By eliminating barriers that prevent those in our workforce from achieving their potential, all are empowered to achieve. We are reminded how diversity and inclusion make us stronger and renew one of our Nation's foundational promises that we are all created equal.

This year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme is "My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am." People with disabilities, like all of us, are the sum of many parts. Disability is only one important perspective they offer, as demonstrated by our awards recipients we honor today. The Department of Defense relies on the abilities of all its personnel to accomplish its mission. We do so by leveraging the talents and skills of a diverse and inclusive workforce. As we commemorate our awards recipients today, let us celebrate all Americans with disabilities who enrich our Department, our Total Force, and our Nation.

Let us all follow the example of these remarkable individuals before us today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ash Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.