

**U.S. AbilityOne Commission
Minutes – Quarterly Public Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 22, 2026
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. ET**

I. Call to Order

U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson Chris Brandt called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. and greeted the approximately 220 participants attending via Zoom.

II. Administrative Remarks and Introductions

Commission Executive Officer Angela Phifer gave administrative remarks. She noted that two American Sign Language interpreters would interpret and that the meeting was being live captioned.

Brandt said she and Commission member Virna Winters had been elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively, at a March meeting of the Commission. Brandt had previously served for several months as Interim Chairperson.

Other Commission members introduced themselves.

Executive Director Kim Zeich and Acting Inspector General Carla Smith introduced themselves and certain staff members.

III. Consideration of Minutes

Minutes from the January 28, 2026 public meeting were approved. (They were later posted on the [Commission Meetings webpage](#) with the agenda, slides, and video.)

IV. Recognition of Chief of Staff Kel Wood

The Chairperson's Meritorious Service Award was presented to Commission Chief of Staff Kel Wood on the occasion of his retirement.

V. Chairperson Remarks

Brandt observed that the midpoint of fiscal year 2026 had passed, and the Commission had already accomplished a great deal, notwithstanding the lapse in appropriations in fall 2025.

She noted that the agency had issued its [FY 2027 Congressional Budget Justification](#) and its [FY 2025 Performance and Accountability Report](#).

Prioritizing Made in America Products

Brandt said the Commission continues to emphasize that prioritizing Made in America products is fundamental to its work. The agency is committed to executing its statutory mission in a manner that fully supports the Made in America Office within the Office of Management and Budget, and aligning and advancing mutual goals throughout the AbilityOne Program, she said.

Brandt said the meeting's public engagement session – "Innovation in AbilityOne Products and Domestic Manufacturing" – would touch on Made in America, and the Commission was hoping to hear attendees' best ideas on this important topic.

Chairperson Memo on Fraud Awareness

Brandt observed that she had recently issued a memo titled "[Zero Tolerance for Fraud, Waste, or Abuse on AbilityOne Contracts](#)." The memo affirmed that it is the policy of the Commission that AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs) shall uphold the highest standards of integrity, protect taxpayer dollars, and maintain operations free from fraud, waste, or abuse in all aspects of AbilityOne contract performance.

The memo's timing was tied to the President's Executive Order 14395, "[Establishing the Task Force To Eliminate Fraud](#)." However, guarding against fraud is not a new area of focus either for the Commission or the Office of Inspector General, but is part of the agency's ongoing effort to emphasize stewardship and accountability, Brandt said.

Conferences

Brandt said that in February the Commission spoke at the NIB/NAEPB 2026 Conference and Expo in Washington, D.C. The conference's theme was "Realizing America's Promise." Commission members Jeff Koses, Jeff Mittman, and Tara Jamison spoke on a panel with Executive Director Zeich.

Brandt also said the Commission was looking forward to participating in May in SourceAmerica's Xforce Conference, which would be another opportunity for strong two-way communication and transparency.

VI. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Zeich gave a [report](#). Rosa Criggedorn, the Commission's AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs) Program Manager, gave an [update](#).

VII. Office of Inspector General Presentation

Acting Inspector General Carla Smith gave an [update](#).

VIII. Public Engagement Session

The Commission had [announced](#) that the public engagement topic would be "Innovation in AbilityOne Products and Domestic Manufacturing." Speakers were invited to highlight examples

including, but not limited to, innovation, efficiency, speed, cost effectiveness, competitiveness, responsiveness to customer needs, reshoring/onshoring materials or components (to use domestic sources), supply chain management, and products developed from domestic raw materials.

Zeich observed that this public engagement session was a follow-up to the January 28, 2026, public meeting, whose public engagement session had discussed innovation and nontraditional services performed in the AbilityOne Program.

Deputy Executive Director Amy Jensen moderated the “Innovation in AbilityOne Products and Domestic Manufacturing” public engagement session.

Jim Meehan, President and CEO, Austin Lighthouse/Travis Association for the Blind, Austin, TX

Meehan showed a short video on how Austin Lighthouse is deploying technology in innovative ways, including using 3-D printing, drones to help with inventory, robots to move things around warehouses, Bluetooth headsets for warehouse management, and hand-held CCTV for reading labels. Austin Lighthouse employee James O’Neal discussed the work he does as a 3-D printer technician.

Pat O’Hara, President and CEO, The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., Seattle, WA

O’Hara gave a [presentation](#) on Seattle Lighthouse capabilities, including use of injection molding, hydro forming, ultrasonic welding, and more. He introduced Mike King, who trains employees on technology like Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines.

Jim Zahora, President and CEO, TAC (The Abilities Connection), Springfield, OH

Zahora gave a [presentation](#) that covered the modernization and reshoring of mission-critical components for the manufacturing of Air Force cargo nets which, as of June 1, 2026, are now 100% made and sourced in the U.S.

Aretha Sims, a TAC employee, discussed how the modernization affected work on the production floor.

David Landsberg, CEO, Goodwill Industries of South Florida, Miami, FL

Landsberg discussed Goodwill Industries of South Florida’s automated conveyance mechanism, which uses AI to route items through the manufacturing process. For employees with disabilities, jobs that were once physically taxing are now accessible and sustainable thanks to this technology, Landsberg said.

He also discussed the nonprofit’s use of automated fabric-cutting equipment that improves precision and material utilization; and digital production planning and shopfloor control visibility tools that allow supervisors to see bottlenecks in real time and to intervene early.

Jensen asked the Commission members if they had any comments on what they had heard. Brandt said the presentations suggested the future was bright for AbilityOne. She said she appreciated hearing from AbilityOne employees about how they support their team and the opportunities they have to advance in their careers and learn new things.

Koses said he appreciated the presentations, including the discussion of technology's role in cost savings and delivering services. Some of the stories he heard could help address misunderstandings about the Program, he said. He asked meeting participants to provide him with further details about AbilityOne products made in the U.S. from components sourced in the U.S., and about reshoring success stories. Such stories are very important, he said.

Mittman thanked the speakers, including the employees who had spoken. He said he had heard a lot about technology not only improving jobs but creating new opportunities and new career fields, and that is something to highlight.

The Commission put a link to a recent NewsNation broadcast, "[American Made: Finger Lakes Textiles the backbone of military clothing | Elizabeth Vargas Reports](#)," in the chat. The broadcast was the first in a series highlighting companies producing in the U.S. (Finger Lakes Textiles is part of Mozaic, an AbilityOne-participating nonprofit based in New York.)

Finally, Tessera's Chief Innovation Officer, Zach Tomlinson, spoke from the production floor of Tessera's manufacturing division. He pointed out a CNC machine that is designed to designed to cut complex hard metals, like titanium. Through such technology, Tessera hopes to expand the capabilities it can offer to customers. That same technology helps individuals with disabilities who want to get into manufacturing trades.

IX. Concluding Remarks

Brandt thanked all the speakers and said the conversation had covered important and thought-provoking topics. She adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Attendees

Approximately 220 people attended, including:

Commission Members

Chris Brandt, Chairperson	Private Citizen
Virna Winters, Vice Chairperson	Department of Commerce
Matthew Beebe	Department of Defense
Tara Jamison	Department of Justice
Jeffrey Koses	General Services Administration
Jeffrey Mittman	Private Citizen
Jennifer Sheehy	Department of Labor

Scheduled Speakers

David Landsberg

CEO, Goodwill Industries of South Florida

Jim Meehan

CEO, Austin Lighthouse/ Travis Assn for the Blind

Pat O'Hara

CEO, Lighthouse for the Blind, Seattle

Jim Zahora

CEO, TAC (The Abilities Connection)