



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

ROBERT L. JOHNSON ANNOUNCES THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS HAS ISSUED A LETTER STRONGLY SUPPORTING THE RLJ RULE

RLJ Rule Urges Companies to Increase Employment and Business Opportunities for Minorities

BETHESDA, MD//DECEMBER 13, 2011// Robert L. Johnson, founder and chairman of The RLJ Companies today announced the Congressional Black Caucus has issued a letter of support for the RLJ Rule. In the letter, the Congressional Black Caucus stated “*We commend you for your long-standing commitment to champion ways that the private sector on a voluntary basis can propose business solutions to help solve social problems. The Congressional Black Caucus continues to address the need for job creation and minority access to capital in underserved communities. We have called upon the private sector to assist us with remedying the crisis through the RLJ Rule, you have answered the call.*”

Johnson has urged all U.S. companies to voluntarily adopt a version of the National Football League’s (NFL) *Rooney Rule*, which afforded minority candidates seeking head-coaching or general manager positions within the League to be considered before a final hiring decision. The **RLJ Rule** (1) encourages companies to voluntarily implement a plan to interview a minimum of two qualified minority candidates for every job opening at the vice president level and above; and, (2) companies would interview at least two qualified minority-owned firms for vendor supplier/services contracts before awarding a new company contract to a vendor.

As the founder of Black Entertainment Television, Johnson has advocated and led the dialogue for many years to empower African Americans by increasing employment opportunities and access to capital. Johnson argues that corporate America can address these two issues by adopting the RLJ Rule which he calls a “business solution to a social problem.”

“The RLJ Rule is principally designed to encourage companies to voluntarily establish a ‘best practices’ policy to identify and interview the tremendous talent pool of minority individuals and businesses that are often overlooked because of traditional hiring or procurement practices,” said Johnson.

Johnson further added, “The purpose of this voluntary RLJ Rule is not to suggest quotas or that companies hire any minority individual or firm that is not qualified. The RLJ Rule, if implemented properly will further enhance a company’s already established commitment to diversity and inclusion.”

The RLJ Rule has also been endorsed by the National Urban League led by Marc Morial and the U.S. Black Chamber, Inc. led by Ron Busby.

A copy of the Congressional Black Caucus letter is attached.

About The RLJ Companies: *The RLJ Companies, founded by Robert L. Johnson, is an innovative business network that provides strategic investments in a diverse portfolio of companies. Within The RLJ Companies portfolio, Johnson owns or holds interests in businesses operating in hotel real estate investment trust; private equity; financial services; asset management; insurance services; automobile dealerships; sports and entertainment; and video lottery terminal (VLT) gaming. The RLJ Companies is headquartered in Bethesda, MD, with affiliate operations in Charlotte, NC; Little Rock, AR; Los Angeles, CA; San Juan, PR; and Monrovia, Liberia. Prior to founding The RLJ Companies, Johnson was founder and chairman of Black Entertainment Television (BET). For additional information please visit: www.rljcompanies.com. For Media Inquiries contact: Traci Otey Blunt 240.744.7858 or press@rljcompanies.com.*

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December 1, 2011

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in order of seniority*

Robert L. Johnson
Founder & Chairman
The RLJ Companies
3 Bethesda Metro Center, Suite 1000
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Congressional Black Caucus strongly supports the RLJ Rule and commends you for your continued efforts to engage the business community in addressing the inequitable unemployment rates for minorities and to increase vendor/supplier opportunities for minority-owned businesses.

The tenets of your proposed RLJ Rule based on the success of the NFL's *Rooney Rule* are (1) encourage companies to voluntarily implement a plan to interview a minimum of two qualified minority candidates for every job opening at the vice president level and above and; (2) encourage companies to interview at least two qualified African American firms for vendor supplier/services contracts before awarding a new company contract. We note the purpose of this voluntary RLJ Rule is not to suggest quotas or to require companies to hire any individual or minority firm. The RLJ Rule is principally designed to encourage companies to establish a "best practices" policy of identifying minority candidates and vendors that are often overlooked under traditional hiring or procurement practices.

We are well aware that African American unemployment remains high at nearly 17 percent and the wealth gap between whites and African Americans is, in terms of net income and access to capital, the largest it has been in decades. Today, the economic disparity impacting minority Americans must be addressed and we share your belief that corporate America has a vital role to play in ensuring that the fastest growing population groups in this country, both as consumers and employees are given a fair chance to compete in the U.S. economy.

We commend you for your long-standing commitment to champion ways that the private sector on a voluntary basis can propose business solutions to help solve social problems. The Congressional Black Caucus continues to address the need for job creation and minority access to capital in underserved communities. We have called upon the private sector to assist us with remedying this crisis and through the RLJ Rule, you have answered the call. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the overall success of minority businesses.

Sincerely,

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Chairman, Congressional Black Caucus

