



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

ROBERT L. JOHNSON URGES U.S. CORPORATIONS TO ESTABLISH A VERSION OF THE “NFL ROONEY RULE” TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Alarming Unemployment Rates and Limited or No Access to Credit and Capital are Contributing to an Unsustainable Wealth Gap between Black and White Households

BETHESDA, MD//OCTOBER 2, 2011//In an effort to engage the business community in addressing the inequitable unemployment rates for African Americans and to increase vendor/supplier opportunities for minority-owned businesses, Black Entertainment Television (BET) founder, Robert L. Johnson and founder of The RLJ Companies, is urging Fortune 1000 companies to “voluntarily” adopt a version of the National Football League’s (NFL) *Rooney Rule*. According to the NFL, the *Rooney Rule* requires NFL teams to give fair interviews to minority candidates whenever a head-coaching or general manager position becomes open, prior to making a final hiring decision. Since the inception of the *Rooney Rule* in 2003, the League currently has eight minority head coaches and five minority general managers.

Johnson urges a similar practice for all U.S. companies and firms called the **RLJ Rule**.

In making this statement, Johnson said, “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 African American managers and African American companies that are often overlooked because of traditional hiring or procurement practices.”

The two-pronged **RLJ Rule**:

- (a) encourages companies to voluntarily implement a plan to interview a minimum of two qualified African American candidates for every job opening at the vice president level and above; and
- (b) encourages companies to interview at least two qualified African American firms for vendor supplier/services contracts before awarding a new company contract to a vendor.

Johnson makes clear the purpose of this voluntary rule is not to suggest quotas or that companies hire any individual or minority firm that is not qualified. Johnson notes that the **RLJ Rule**, if implemented properly, will further enhance a company’s already established commitment to diversity and inclusion.

(more)

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Johnson further stated, “Just as America has embraced the notion of fairness in tax rates, *i.e.* the “Buffet Rule”, I am urging corporate America to embrace this idea of providing fairness and equity in employment opportunities at senior management levels and in growth opportunities for African American businesses. As the NFL’s *Rooney Rule* has demonstrated successfully in professional football, a similar commitment by corporate America will assure that the best and brightest African Americans have a chance to show that they can participate and contribute in the most competitive game of all – the U.S. economy,” he concluded.

Johnson also announced that he is sending a letter seeking support for voluntary implementation of the RLJ Rule to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the Business Council, the U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce, the Executive Leadership Council (ELC), the President’s Jobs Council, Congressional leadership of both parties, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), National Urban League (NUL), the NAACP, National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), the National Black MBA Association (NMBBAA), as well as other civic, civil rights, and faith-based organizations.

***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.*

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