



NEWS RELEASE

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**RAMANI AYER, CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF THE HARTFORD, NAMED CHAIRMAN
OF BusinessLINC, NATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP**

Washington, D.C. – The Business Roundtable (BRT) announced today that Ramani Ayer, chairman and chief executive officer of The Hartford Financial Services Group, has been named chairman of BusinessLINC.

BusinessLINC, developed to stimulate economic growth in cities and distressed rural areas by fostering partnerships between small and large businesses, is a public-private partnership run by The Business Roundtable. Currently operating in 13 economically distressed communities, including New York City, the Mississippi Delta, Washington, D.C., and Dallas, BusinessLINC brings large corporations and small businesses together to enhance their economic vitality and competitive capacity as well as the overall health of their communities.

“Ramani Ayer, a proven corporate and community leader, is an obvious choice to head BusinessLINC, and to help make sure that our nation’s small businesses have the chance to succeed,” said John Dillon, Chairman of the BRT and Chairman and CEO of International Paper. “He is an outstanding businessman who will be able to bring together small businesses and large corporations to the benefit of both and the communities they serve.”

“Developing sound business partnerships between large companies and small, and growing all our businesses is essential to the continued success of the American economy and strength of our country,” said Ayer. “Now, in this current economic slowdown, the business community needs to come together to find new markets, form new partnerships and mine new opportunities. Small business is integral to the American economy and will play a crucial role in the current economic uncertainty. The relationships established through BusinessLINC provide small businesses with the sound business knowledge they need to succeed.”

“The Hartford has a strong commitment to the community, and a tremendous record of working with small businesses and entrepreneurs on their insurance and financial needs,” said Don Graves, Executive Director of BusinessLINC. “Playing a leadership role in BusinessLINC is a logical step for both the company and Mr. Ayer.”

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Ramani Ayer, Chairman and CEO of The Hartford, Named Chairman of BusinessLINC

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About BusinessLINC

Created in 1999, BusinessLINC is a product of The Business Roundtable, The U.S. Treasury Department and the U.S. Small Business Administration. The network is designed to bring large corporations and small businesses together to increase the exchange of business opportunities and experience and to promote the success of local, often minority- and women-owned businesses.

Local BusinessLINC coalitions are currently located in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Flint, Mich., Houston, the Mississippi River Delta, New York, Richmond, Va., San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and the Southwest border, along with a pilot in Minnesota focusing on Native American communities. New coalitions are being formed in Atlanta, Miami, St. Louis, Kansas City, Hartford and Los Angeles.

About Ramani Ayer

Since taking the helm of The Hartford Financial Services Group in February, 1997, Ramani Ayer has guided the company's dramatic growth from a traditional insurance company into a diversified financial services enterprise with \$171 billion in assets, continuing the leadership he offered in his six years as President and Chief Operating Officer of The Hartford's property-casualty operations. Ayer, who has held a number of senior positions at the company, joined The Hartford in 1973.

Ayer is Chairman of the American Insurance Association, a board member of the American Institute for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters/Insurance Institute of America and a board member of the Insurance Information Institute. He is also a member of The Business Roundtable and of the Board of Directors of Hartford Hospital as well as a trustee of the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut. He holds master's and doctorate degrees in chemical engineering from Drexel University, and a bachelor's degree from the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay.

About The Hartford

Founded in 1810, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. (NYSE: HIG) is one of the nation's largest insurance and financial services companies. The Hartford is a leading provider of investment products, life insurance and group benefits; automobile and homeowners products; business insurance; and reinsurance. The company is the largest seller of individual annuities in the U.S. and has been a provider of auto homeowners insurance to members of AARP since 1984.

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The Business Roundtable is an association of chief executive officers of leading corporations with a combined workforce of more than 10 million employees in the United States and \$3.5 trillion in revenues. The chief executives are committed to advocating public policies that foster vigorous economic growth and a dynamic global economy.