

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By: Ron Eller, Legislative Chair

August, 2011

The RSVA Legislative Committee, along with Dan Sippl and Robert Humphreys, Esq., has been working to increase the viability of the Randolph-Sheppard Program. Your Legislative Committee is continually monitoring activities and responding to appropriate legislative contacts on important issues that come to their attention which affect our program.

RSVA's priorities are addressed, especially as recently, when concerns were expressed about the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act as it pertains to the livelihood of so many blind and visually impaired business people and their families. The Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act has been undergoing hearings in both Congressional houses. Congressman Mica from Florida has been holding hearings on the House side and Senator Barbara Boxer has been holding hearings on the Senate Side.

Many vendors have been closely watching the Hearings to see if anything will affect the Kenelly Amendment which protects the rights of blind vendors in rest areas throughout the nation. Senator Boxer has indicated her support for blind vendor rights in the rest areas, and Senator Kirk of Illinois has not noted any commercialization requests at this time. Following a Roadside Rest Area Panel discussion at the annual convention in July, it was concluded that vendors will have to remain vigilant in watching this proposed legislation, as it travels through the committees.

Future legislation possibly affecting BEP facilities could be whether the Americans for Disabilities Act regulations will have any impact on the vending industry. Machines will be redesigned to meet those new regulations and SLAs and vendor/managers will need to comply with those regulations when purchasing new machines.

Also, the deadline for energy compliance testing for bottled or canned beverage vending machines has been extended to August

31, 2012. All manufacturers of these machines must bring their designs into compliance by this date.

We continue to work with White House staff and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to have the President sign an Executive Order for all Federal Agencies to recognize and prioritize the Randolph Sheppard Act. We are also diligently working with agencies to establish standards and guidelines when working with third party contractors, such as our teaming partners in our military dining contracts.

Most BEP facilities have been affected by local county and state legislation regarding "Healthy Choice" vending and food service requirements. There have been many local regulations passed for the benefit of the nations school districts, and those regulations are now trickling over to BEP government vending and facilities.

In California, AB 727, which would have required 100% healthy choice vending in all government facilities by 2016 (and 50% by 2014) was defeated this past week, due to the excessive state costs projections necessary to enforce this legislation. This legislation would have affected the cafeterias and snack bars as well as the government facilities. The BEP vendors attended the hearings and voiced their concerns as to how this legislation could affect their sales and resultant decline in income, as state employees would just walk across the street to the local "mom and pop" to purchase their Snicker bars and other products.

Please keep the RSVA Legislative Committee informed of any concerns you have for legislation either on your state level or the national level. It is important to garner support for your issues and the legislative Committee is there to help.

Please check out the Announcement for the ACB Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C. in February 2012, following this article. RSVA vendors are always welcome to attend, as it is important to meet with your legislators concerning issues impacting us.