

# **THE WHITE PAPER**

## **(A Sagebrush Panel Discussion)**

*Compiled By: Ron Eller, RSVA Legislative Chair*

As you may recall, a copy of the BEA "White Paper" was published in the last issue of the Vendorscope. The Sagebrush 2011 Committee thought the Conference would be great timing for a panel discussion on this White Paper, which had been distributed in the weeks before the Conference.

The BEA Steering Committee had created this document over a period of several months. Terry Smith, Director of Tennessee BEP and a BEA committee member, opened his remarks stating that the White Paper was not an official document, but should be considered a working document. The White Paper was created to stimulate dialog between the Randolph-Sheppard program vendors and other entities concerned about the health of the R-S program. Mr. Smith also noted the steering committee knew the document would not be accepted by the vendor community as is, but it would create much discussion on the good and bad points put forth. Everyone has seemed concerned over the decline of opportunities for blind entrepreneurs over the past several years, as well as the need for future advancement of the Randolph-Sheppard program to regain new opportunities and replace those already lost due to the economy, political climate, downsizing of government programs.

The panel (and attendee participants) seemed to be in agreement that the program is in need of a new type of administration, whether it is a renewed effort by RSA, a privatization of the program, or a non-profit organization as a national nominee, which would also be responsible for a national R-S training program. This could also include a type of national licensure for vendors as well.

Dan Sippl, President, RSVA, stated that now is the time for all consumer organizations to come together and advocate making the program stronger to ensure its growth and diversity of opportunities outside of food service facilities. Dan indicated that all blindness organizations must come to agreement on these issues, as agreement is essential for future growth of the program.

Bob Humphreys, RSVA attorney, as well as former RSA Commissioner, said the time might be right to consider changes to the Randolph-Sheppard Act. At the same time, he reminded everyone of the political mine fields that must be navigated if the Randolph-Sheppard Act is opened for new legislation.

I would like to express my appreciation to the panelists for their time to be a part of the discussion of the future of the Randolph-Sheppard program. The panel discussion was widely attended by conference attendees, and there were many positive comments during and after the presentation.

Donnie Anderson, Editor of the Vendorscope, will continue to accept comments and suggestions concerning the White Paper, which can be found on the RSVA.biz website, in the Winter 2010 Vendorscope issue. Watch for further comments in future Vendorscope issues.

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