



RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD VENDORS OF AMERICA™
BLIND BUSINESSMEN AND BUSINESSWOMEN BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA



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A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE RSVA™
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America™ is proud of its long history in support of blind vendors and the blind vending facility program throughout the country. We will continue to demonstrate our effectiveness and our forward-looking approach to assisting blind managers and improving their program. This message is written to show the many RSVA™ accomplishments during the past 45 years adding to the well-being of blind managers and their families across America.

Some History

Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America™ (RSVA™) was the first organization in the world comprised of blind vendors licensed and operating vending facilities. Durward K. McDaniel, national representative for the American Council of the Blind, was the driving force in establishing RSVA™ in December, 1967. The first meeting of organized blind vendors was held in San Francisco in 1968. The following year, we held our first convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, and became a chartered affiliate of the American Council of the Blind.

RSVA™ is one of twenty-five special interest affiliates of ACB, each separately governed but affiliated and working together to further related goals. The first award presented by RSVA™ was conferred on Leonard Robinson, a blind lawyer and friend of Senator Jennings Randolph, who convinced Randolph to push for the blind vendor program. The blind vendor law was signed by President Roosevelt on June 20, 1936.

The *Vendorscope* is the official communication organ of RSVA™. The first two issues of the *Vendorscope* were published in the ACB's Braille Forum in 1971 and 1972. Then, the *Vendorscope* was published separately by RSVA™. Since its beginning, the *Vendorscope* has brought to blind vendors and State Licensing Agency officials important news and updates on the Business Enterprise Program, and information on issues of particular importance to blind vendors. It highlights the work of the many RSVA™ committees, and informs stakeholders on legislation that would either benefit or hurt the Randolph-Sheppard program on both the Federal and State levels.

Robert R. Humphreys, Esq., has been RSVA™'s primary attorney for many years, and has worked diligently with the RSVA™ Board to further positive changes in the Randolph-Sheppard program. Previously Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Humphreys was the principal drafter and developer of major legislation, including the landmark Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Randolph-Sheppard Act Amendments of 1974. Durward McDaniel was the major force behind the first food service contracts for military dining facilities in the early 1990s. RSVA™ leadership advocated for the Kennelly Amendment, which applied the Randolph-Sheppard priority to Interstate rest areas across the country.

The Western Sagebrush National Training Conference was created in 1981. RSVA™ was the first national organization of blind vendors to offer its leadership. When the organization faltered, RSVA™ jumped in to make certain that this important training program was preserved without interruption. Sagebrush is now completely operated and sponsored by RSVA™ as the Sagebrush National BEP Training Conference. This preeminent annual business conference continues to be the leader in providing a forum of vital importance to blind vendors nationwide, whether they are RSVA™ members or not. At Sagebrush, both blind managers and State and national officials interested in the blind vendor program can learn together and share information. It has also provided an opportunity for hundreds of food service and blindness-related vendors and companies the chance to showcase their products and services to the Randolph-Sheppard community.

RSVA™ Initiatives

From its beginning, RSVA™ has shared the benefits of a partnership with the American Council of the Blind. Although we are two separately governed organizations, our affiliation with ACB has given RSVA™ a broader forum and enabled us to garner more support. ACB's presence in the nation's capital and full-time staff along with RSVA™'s Legislative Committee gives RSVA™ the ability to react rapidly when things start to move fast on Capitol Hill that could adversely affect our program's priority. Working together as a legislative action network, our two organizations have acted quickly to make sure nothing changes the Randolph-Sheppard priority.

Each year RSVA™ continues to build our relationship with ACB and its membership by holding our national convention in conjunction with the ACB national convention. For more than thirty years, RSVA™'s members have attended and supported the American Council of the Blind's Annual Legislative Seminar where RSVA™'s members and members of other affiliates advocate for the R-S Program and other blindness specific legislation and regulations.

RSVA™ joined other blindness organizations, other vendor organizations, military teaming partners, and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind in the establishment of the Blind Entrepreneurs Alliance. The Alliance contracted with Linchpin Strategies, Inc. to increase our unified commitment to the Randolph-Sheppard Act. This alliance proved very successful until the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, some teaming partners, and RSVA™ (including ACB) were left to wholly fund the effort. This proved to be challenging and the coalition was disbanded. RSVA™ still believes that a united alliance is the best way to preserve and support the Randolph-Sheppard Program.

Through its D. K. McDaniel Legal Fund, RSVA™ has provided financial and legal assistance (as funds permit) for individuals or states in cases where outcomes might adversely affect the national program, such as the historic settlement in a California case and the more recent Marine Corps vendors' legal issue.

Recent RSVA™/ACB victories have included working with the White House to have a Presidential Proclamation directing federal agency officials to adhere to the Randolph-Sheppard priority when pursuing the establishment and operation of vending facilities on federal property. This proclamation was approved and signed by President Obama on January 20, 2012. The team had a primary role in defeating the so-called “Portman Amendment” which would have allowed commercialization of roadside rest stops, endangering blind vending operations at such locations. RSVA™’s crack Legislation Committee keeps track of all important legislation and acts proactively to notify the membership of any action needing to be taken.

In addition to our role as advocates for the Randolph-Sheppard Program on both the State and National level, RSVA™’s officers and Board members are available for technical and other assistance in state programs where needed. RSVA™ delegates can be available for your state vendor meetings. Let us know when your next statewide meeting is scheduled so we can help you improve your program.

RSVA™ is a grass-roots organization where everyone's voice counts. So get involved. If you are not yet a member, come join us. Together we can make a difference for vendors, for state agencies, and for the program nationwide. **HELP US MAKE YOUR PROGRAM GROW AND SUCCEED!**

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