



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
BLIND MERCHANTS

*Live the life you want.*

## BLIND ENTREPRENEURS INITIATIVE

### THE BLITZ October, 2018

Sorry we have been away for a while. We have had a few things on our plate as you will see below. It has no doubt been an extremely busy summer in the world of Randolph-Sheppard. The merry-go-round doesn't look like it's going to slow down anytime soon. It should not come as any surprise that this is probably the longest Blitz ever. We apologize on the front end but hope you will read the entire newsletter. Let's get to the news!

***Pack Your Bags for Texas and the Lone Star BLAST*** – They say 'they do things bigger and better in Texas.' If this year's BLAST Conference is any indication, that statement is true! The 2018 BLAST will take place November 13-16 at the magnificent Hyatt Regency Hill Country in San Antonio, Texas. We are anticipating 500-600 in attendance and we have some great things planned. We have some outstanding keynoters and trainers lined up and don't forget the amazing trade show which moves to Thursday afternoon this year. The trade show is generally the highlight of the event. We start out strong Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, with an all day exclusive SLA training. This training is being co-sponsored by the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind. In addition, we will have some terrific breakout sessions that afternoon for other participants. We will conclude on Friday morning with our first ever women's walk. You can register for the walk at <https://blindmerchants.org/blast-womens-walk/> Friday morning as also been set aside for an in-depth discussion of the critical issues facing Randolph- Sheppard today. Along the way, you can count of us throwing in a little fun.

You won't want to miss it. If you hurry, you can get our early bird registration rate. You can register as well as book your hotel room by going to <https://blindmerchants.org/blast-2018-information/>. The bad news is rooms are almost gone so we are looking at overflow options. If you can't get a room at

the Hyatt, contact Terry Smith at [tsmith@nfb.org](mailto:tsmith@nfb.org) He will see how he can assist. See you in San Antonio.

***NABM Pulls Off D.C. Hat Trick*** – Sorry if you are not familiar with the hockey term but it is the best way to describe the NABM sponsored events in D.C. in May. We had 3 events going on simultaneously. All three were smashing successes. Here is a brief recap:

**Blind Entrepreneurs Let Their Voices Be Heard During Fly-In** –

125 blind entrepreneurs and other stakeholders showed up on Capitol Hill to tell their stories to members of Congress. There were some amazing stories told and we were well received by members and staffers. There were 3 important issues on which our Hill visitors focused. They were:

1. Rest area commercialization
2. Challenges in DOD contracting
3. The Department of Education's failure to timely convene arbitration panels, approve state rules, or provide needed policy guidance

To review the fact sheets that were shared with members of Congress, go to <https://blindmerchants.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Fly-In-Issue3-Education.pdf>

With the full support of President Riccobono, the National Federation of the Blind's Office on Advocacy and Policy played a vital role in the success of the Fly-In. John Pare and Gabe Cazares from that office played an integral part in the planning and they provided training to the attendees on how to advocate. The help was much appreciated.

Four Randolph-Sheppard entrepreneurs from East Tennessee attended the Fly-In. Check out the publicity in the local newspaper back home: <https://www.greenevillesun.com/content/tncms/live/>

**Stakeholders Identify Critical Issues** – With so many blind entrepreneurs in town, it was the perfect opportunity to put on a conference designed to identify the critical issues facing Randolph-Sheppard today. We had outside speakers present on key issues but they spent a lot of time in open dialogue about the issues as well. Following the conference, NABM produced a document outlining the issues. That document can be found at <https://blindmerchants.org/critical-issues-conference/> . Now, the question is, what do we do now that we have identified the problems? We will tackle that on Friday morning at BLAST when we start the process of planning for the future. Plan on staying for the final day of BLAST and be part of that important process.

**NABM Continues to Train the Next Generation of Leaders** – In

conjunction with the Critical Issues Conference and Fly-In, NABM conducted its third Emerging Leaders class. The participants had their own training tract, but they were afforded the opportunity to spend some time on The Hill. They also participated in discussions with the larger group about critical issues. Learning how to advocate and knowing the issues are critical for future leaders.

Welcome to the 2018 Emerging Leaders class that includes:

Scott Gehres – Indiana  
Megan Honrighousen – Arizona  
Yvonne Reilly-Bochmore – New York  
Roderick Roberts – Washington  
Karla Martinez – Texas  
Kenneth Landtroop – Texas  
Ivan Delgado Villa – Nevada  
Beverly Anderson – South Carolina  
Guadalupe Steel – Arizona  
Tassie Thompson – Maryland  
Miguel Rocha – Nebraska  
Lynn Florence – Kentucky  
William Robinson – New Jersey

Plans for a 2019 class have not been announced yet. If you are interested in being part of the next class, watch for the announcement.

***Rest Area Commercialization: Not Time for a Victory Celebration*** – Our message of *'just say no'* was well received on The Hill at our May Fly-In; however, we were not alone in delivering the same message. Other organizations held their fly-ins as well. The message was the same from the National Association of Truck Stop Operators, National Association of Convenience Stores, and the National Automatic Merchandising Association. It was very significant that rest area commercialization was the top agenda item at NAMA's Fly-In in July. That probably wouldn't have happened just a decade ago. It speaks to the importance of NABM President, Nicky Gacos, being on the NAMA Board of Directors and his ability to build partnerships. As a result of all of this advocacy, we got good news when Congressman Bill Shuster, Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, released his infrastructure bill. It did not include rest area commercialization. We had won the battle but victory is not assured. It is no secret that Congressman Shuster actually supports commercialization even though he did not include it in the bill. But his bill is, what amounts to, a discussion document in which many amendments can be expected. Many people still support the idea and will be lobbying members of the Committee. Congressman Banks' bill still lingers out there even though it is not getting much traction at this point. We must remain vigilant and we need to continue to educate Congress about the impact rest area commercialization

would have on blind entrepreneurs. The NFB and NABM will continue to work with our industry partners to do just that. The livelihoods of 400 blind entrepreneurs or approximately 22% of our program nationally depend on us.

***NFB and NABM Continue to Press the Department of Education*** – At its July convention, the National Federation of the Blind passed resolution 2018-16 regarding issues with respect to the Department of Education’s administration of the Randolph-Sheppard Program. In general, NABM has been very pleased with DOE’s support of Randolph-Sheppard, especially as it relates to military dining issues. There has, however, been a growing frustration over backlogs in issuing arbitration convening letters, approving state BEP rules, and issuing needed policy guidance on key issues. To review the resolution, go to <https://nfb.org/convention/2018/resolutions>. Education Assistant Secretary, Johnny Collett, was a featured speaker at the convention. NABM President Nicky Gacos had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Collett about NABM’s concerns. Mr. Collett invited Nicky to come to D.C. to meet and discuss the issues further. Nicky and Terry Smith met with Mr. Collett and other key staff on July 25<sup>th</sup> and had a very productive conversation. Not only were the backlogs discussed, but the discussion also included prior approval and issues with renovations that are discussed in more detail below. Mr. Collett said we could sit and admire the problem or we can all come up with solutions. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, President Gacos submitted a letter that included the following 11 recommendations:

1. RSA should grant a waiver to state vocational rehabilitation agencies for the prior written approval requirements.
2. RSA should set clear policy guidance on what is an allowable VR expenditure in terms of installing or renovating vending facilities, ensuring that states have the flexibility to modify space as necessary to create a business opportunity for a blind person, with the only limitation being that no loadbearing walls can be moved or constructed.
3. If it is determined that funds were expended inappropriately, states should be held harmless until such guidance is provided and business should be conducted as usual until recommendation #2 is addressed.
4. RSA should ensure that when non-program staff are making decisions about Randolph-Sheppard matters that the subject matter experts are consulted.
5. RSA should ensure that there is an avenue to appeal decisions made by non-program staff on Randolph-Sheppard matters.
6. More resources must be devoted by the Department to the Office of General Counsel at least until the current backlog is eliminated.
7. RSA should conduct an internal review of documents that necessitate OGC review.
8. The Department should provide the Randolph-Sheppard Program Specialist with the flexibility to determine what requires a legal review.
9. A determination must be made as to whether or not states can be given interim approval of their rules pending final review by OGC.

10. The Department should formalize the position expressed to Congressman Sessions by Secretary DeVos as it relates to the Randolph-Sheppard priority for troop dining contracts; and,
11. Policy guidance should be provided on other critical issues facing the Randolph-Sheppard program, which have been a source of contention and frustration on the state level for a number of years.

As important as eliminating the backlogs is, RSA's requirement that states get prior approval for any purchase exceeding \$5,000, to send a blind vendor to training, or conduct a meeting of the Committee of Blind Vendors is far more troubling for the larger program as is its stance on using federal dollars to renovate vending facilities. RSA is taking the position that federal dollars cannot be spent on such things as painting, carpeting, lighting, electrical work, plumbing, installing non-load bearing partitions, etc. All of these have been allowed for the past 50 years. If RSA sticks with this interpretation, it will cripple the program nationwide and result in fewer opportunities for blind entrepreneurs.

***Is There Some Good News at RSA?*** – It looks like RSA is finally getting ready to fulfill its commitment to bring on additional staff in the Randolph-Sheppard Unit. Jesse Hartle has been a one-man show for too long. The Department of Education recently advertised for 2 positions that when filled will help support Randolph-Sheppard. NABM has been advocating for this for sometime now and is very pleased that it is finally coming to fruition.

***But Still No RSA Commissioner*** - The Senate still has not confirmed President Trump's nominee to be the next RSA Commissioner. In March, the President nominated Mark Shultz to be the new RSA Commissioner. Mr. Shultz is the Director of the Nebraska VR Agency. He appears to be well qualified; however, still no confirmation. The agency has been without a political leader for almost two years now and that is not a good thing when tackling the critical issues being faced by Randolph-Sheppard.

***Where Are the Women?*** – Earlier this year, NABM President Nicky Gacos started what he was calling the Women's Initiative. He appointed Melba Taylor, a Maryland blind entrepreneur, to lead the Initiative. We all knew that women are underrepresented in Randolph-Sheppard, but we needed to quantify that. Step 1 was to survey the states to try to get some numbers. The results surprised even some members of the Committee. Only 24% of Randolph-Sheppard blind entrepreneurs are women. That same percentage is reflected in the makeup of Elected Committees of Blind Vendors. The data was shared with National Federation of the Blind President, Mark Riccobono, who enlisted the help of Dr. Arielle Silverman. Dr. Silverman wrote a report that summarizes the findings of the survey. To review the entire report, go to <https://blindmerchants.org/nabm-report-participation-women-randolph-sheppard/>

***Department of Defense: The Same Old Story*** – The names and places have

changed but the storylines have not. The battle to ensure DOD's compliance with the Randolph-Sheppard Act rages on. There are new arbitration complaints and new court cases while the old ones still work their ways through the system. Here's a brief recap of some of the DOD issues:

**Fort Irwin** – Following the same playbook it used at Fort Bliss in Texas, the Army recently issued a solicitation for Fort Irwin in California. It is attempting to split the full food and DFA services into 2 separate contracts. The SLA, with Ron Long as the blind vendor and FSIG as its teaming partner, currently operates the entire contract including the DFA. The Texas SLA challenged the Army's decision at Fort Bliss but lost in arbitration. An appeal has been filed in federal court with a ruling expected soon. In the meantime, NABM is encouraging the California SLA to challenge the contract splitting.

**Luke Air Force Base** – The Air Force made it known sometime ago that it intended to contract with AbilityOne to provide its food service at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. The Air Force's position was that it was a DFA contract and not subject to the Randolph-Sheppard priority; however, there is food involved and there was even contingency cooking in the scope of work. The SLA indicated its interest in the contract and RSA advised AbilityOne that the contract was subject to the Randolph-Sheppard priority. Nonetheless, AbilityOne put the service on the Procurement list taking it out of the Randolph-Sheppard arena probably forever. As we go to press, it is our understanding that the SLA does not intend to pursue federal arbitration. The result is an opportunity lost.

**Hill Air Force Base** – This one may be going down the same road as Luke. It is currently operated under Randolph-Sheppard but the Air Force has indicated it plans to award the contract to AbilityOne. Again, RSA has gotten involved. This one isn't as far along as Luke but we will be monitoring.

**Marine Contract** – It was not good news on the Marine Corps contracts. The Marines had issued solicitations for two separate contracts – one for Marine bases in the East (South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and D.C.) and one for the West (California and Arizona). South Carolina took the lead on bidding in the East and California did the same in the West. Both selected FSIG as the teaming partner; however, both contracts were awarded to Sodexo, who is the incumbent. The reasons the Randolph-Sheppard proposals were eliminated is pretty technical. South Carolina has filed for arbitration, feeling the award violated the Randolph-Sheppard Act. No word yet on California's plans.

**Nutrition Care Contract** – This case took an interesting twist. South Carolina had bid on a multi-state contract to service cafeterias in 8

different Army hospitals. The SLA was not awarded the contract but prevailed in arbitration. The Army did not honor the decision of the panel so the SLA appealed to federal court. The judge ruled that the court of claims is the proper venue to hear the complaint rather than district court.

**Fort Riley and AbilityOne** – This case just keeps getting more and more complicated. This was a Randolph-Sheppard facility, but the scope of work allegedly was changing, so the Army attempted to give it to AbilityOne. The SLA was successful in getting an injunction and eventually won in arbitration. Source America, the nonprofit that operates the AbilityOne program, had filed a request with the Department of Education to intervene in the arbitration complaint. That request was denied. Source America sued in federal court and that's where the case is now. The case is significant, in that you have a third party attempting to intervene in a Randolph-Sheppard arbitration. If the Court rules that such a third party can in fact intervene, it could create chaos for future Randolph-Sheppard panels. The case is so significant that NABM is helping fund the legal battle and attempted to file an amicus brief.

**Fort Benning Competitive Range Issue** – If the Army has its way, Georgia will be losing one of the largest Randolph-Sheppard troop dining contracts in the country. The SLA's proposal was ruled out of the competitive range. There are some serious questions about how the competitive range was established. This case is yet another one likely headed to arbitration.

**Still Waiting at Fort Lee** – The Virginia SLA had operated this contract for several years, but lost it last year when its proposal was ruled out of the competitive range. Again, there were serious questions about how the award was made. The SLA filed for arbitration in July of 2017. As we go to press, RSA still has not issued the convening letter. Remember the earlier discussion about the backlog in RSA? Well, this is a prime example. In the meantime, Randolph-Sheppard is out.

**Proposed Regulations** – Various DOD representatives have indicated that DOD intends to move forward with the troop dining regulations it had proposed in 2016. September was the projected date. Although September has come and gone, we have learned from DoD insiders that the process has indeed started. You may recall, those regs would effectively eliminate the Randolph-Sheppard priority for military dining contracts. NABM led an effort to generate over 5,000 comments in opposition to the regulations and to date DOD has not moved to finalize them. NABM is utilizing its political contacts to pressure DOD to ensure that it does not finalize rules that violate the Randolph-Sheppard Act. NABM believes that DOD has no authority to promulgate Randolph-Sheppard rules. Congress gave only the Department of Education this

authority. If DoD does in fact proceed, they will be met with a legal challenge from NABM.

***Tenth Circuit Rules on Damages*** – In a much anticipated decision, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court's ruling that upheld the award of damages to a blind vendor by an arbitration panel. The case hinged on the issue of sovereign immunity of the states. It is unclear what impact this ruling will have on other similar cases that are in courts around the country. It also remains to be seen if the blind vendor will try to appeal to the Supreme Court. As it now stands, courts are divided on the issue of damages. This ruling only directly affects the states in the Tenth District which include Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. However, the ruling will certainly be cited in other cases in other states. There are similar cases in Oregon, Wisconsin, Ohio, and North Carolina. Stay tuned. This issue is not going to go away.

***Helping Tennessee Celebrate 75 Years of Blind Entrepreneurship*** - 2018 represents the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tennessee Business Enterprises. NABM played a big part in the celebration. The State of Tennessee contracted with NABM to conduct the two-day training event. It was a huge success. With the quality of the speakers, it was almost like a mini BLAST. Happy Birthday TBE!!!! NABM is available to contract with other states to do their annual training conferences. For more information, contact Nicky Gacos or Terry Smith.

***NABM Hosts Midwest Training Conference*** – Many years ago, when RSA had regional offices, regional Randolph-Sheppard training was a staple of the program. The 6 or 7 states in a region would bring their BEP Director, a staff person or two, and a couple of blind vendors together for a small training program. When the RSA regional offices closed in the early 2000's, most of these regional trainings went away too. The one in Region 3 (D.C. and the nearby states) survived for a few years, but it has since disappeared. Two years ago, the Region 5 states got together and conducted their own regional training. They wanted to do it again this fall and NABM agreed to facilitate the training. It was held September 19-21 in Des Moines, Iowa. The states included in this training were Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, and South Dakota. Kansas, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Nebraska was invited as well. NABM is open to the idea of hosting regional training in other regions. If your region is interested, let us know.

***Convention News: Blind Merchants Meet in Orlando*** – The Blind Merchants met at the 2018 Convention of the National Federation of the Blind in Orlando, Florida in July. Approximately 70 blind entrepreneurs and other interested persons attended the meeting. President Gacos put together a great agenda for the meeting. It was an election year and the following officers were re-elected:

President – Nicky Gacos



1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Harold Wilson  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Ed Birmingham  
Secretary – Sharon Treadway  
Treasurer – Pam Schnurr

The following were elected to board seats:

Barbara Manual – Alabama (1 Year Term)  
Melissa Smith – Tennessee  
John Fritz – Wisconsin  
Debra Smith – Arizona  
Lewanda Miranda - Oregon

**Pushing Accessibility** – Micromarkets offer great potential for Randolph-Sheppard blind entrepreneurs. Ensuring that micromarket kiosks are accessible to blind users is a top priority of NABM President, Nicky Gacos. He has appointed Board Member Zach Snow from Georgia to lead the Initiative. Together they are working with, and quite honestly putting pressure on, Avanti, 365, and 32 Markets to make their systems accessible. Great progress is being made. They are also working with Square.

**Illinois Congressman Accepts Blind Vendor's Invitation to Visit His Vending Facility** – We could tell you the story but this letter to fellow vendors from Illinois blind entrepreneur Jim Wagner says it all.

*I'm writing all of you today to tell you about something that honestly is pretty awesome for all of us. In May of this year, I traveled to Washington DC, for a Critical Issues Seminar. The training was excellent as always. Terry Smith was teaching us on the three most important Critical Issues that are currently affecting all Randolph Sheppard Vendors both NFB & ACB as well. Prior to our arrival in DC, each registered Blind Entrepreneur had appointments set up for them - one for your House of Representatives and one for your Senators. We were told that some people may not have an appointment if their congressman / congresswoman were not able to meet. After hours of training, I was ready to meet my Rep & Senator and fight to support our issues.*

*The next day we assembled early, dressed to impress. After arriving at Capitol Hill we again met as a group for an informative breakfast, where the issues were once again discussed in a Q & A fashion. I was one of a few unlucky Blind Managers who did not get an appointment with my Rep. I went up and asked Terry Smith what I should do, feeling a bit like I'd wasted stipend money as DC is very expensive. Terry told me to stop by my Rep's office anyway to let him know that I came all the way from Chicago to meet him. Okay so long story short, I did visit the office of Randy Hultgren and was told to come back in the afternoon for a brief meet & greet with no meeting. I came back in the afternoon had a very quick sit down with Randy. He apologized for*

*not having the time for a formal meeting, but offered to visit me in district at my BEP facility in Chicago when Summer Session was over.*

*In late July I reached out to Randy's staff by phone, in effort to set up the promised meeting. The call went great. Before I could even remind him about the meeting, Tom his staffer, told me they were literally just talking about me the day before as they were making Randy's in district appointments. Less than a week later on August 20, 2018, Randy Hultgren walks into my facility by himself no staff. I had planned for Randy's visit and invited Shawn Sturges a recent graduate of Illinois BEP training. I wanted to Show Randy Hultgren a new bright young entrepreneur educated and waiting for his first BEP facility. In addition, I wanted to share my 28 years in the BEP and how it has created a great career and lifestyle for me and family. In addition, I managed a Rest Area from 1994 – 2000 so, I had firsthand knowledge on how vital our Highway Rest Areas are to Blind Managers across the country. We were well trained and presented all three issues right here in my office, Randy took notes, asked questions, and acknowledged all of our issues. He was unaware of HR 1990. He told us he knows Congressman Banks from Indiana and will talk to him about Rest Area Commercialization saying he would never vote on that. In addition, he shared that he is not on the committees such as transportation, asking me to contact him if and when any issue affecting our organization. The meeting time was set for 30 minutes, Shawn and I created a friendly atmosphere allowing the congressman to get to know us personally before presenting the issues. At one point, we started talking about election year as this is the end of Randy's two-year term. The fourteenth district primarily Republican has a strong Democratic candidate from Naperville IL. I shared with Randy that perhaps members of our group could attend a fundraiser.. he welcomed that.*

*To sum it up, I can tell you, if you ever get the chance to invite a Representative or Senator to your BEP facility, do it. Show them how a blind person uses adaptive technology to manage a business, lead employees and who is a working member of society overcoming all odds and obstacles. That is what we, in the Randolph Sheppard Program. do every day of our lives and we're proud of it!*

**Jim Wagner**  
Wood Street Station  
BEP facility 175  
Chicago IL.

**To Tax or Not to Tax** – In June, the Governor of California signed into law a bill that prohibits local governments from taxing beverages. Several cities around the country have passed or attempted to pass beverage or so-called 'sugar taxes'. Philadelphia and Cook County, Illinois (Chicago) were the most notable, although Cook County later repealed its law. Many in the vending and beverage industries hailed this as a victory and they had good reason to feel that way. The California Dental Association and California Medical Association countered with a

push to put a statewide soda tax on the ballot. The earliest a vote could take place is 2020, but if enacted, it could become the first such statewide soda tax in the country. Our blind entrepreneur friends in California will surely be impacted.

***Illinois to Hold Joint NFB / Blind Merchants Meeting*** – In what could be a model for other states, the Illinois blind vendors will hold their annual training conference in conjunction with the annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois. The combined event will take place the last weekend in October in Chicago, Illinois. There will be training specifically for the blind entrepreneurs, but there will also be some combined sessions. NABM President Nicky Gacos and NFBEI Director Terry Smith both plan on being there to support the effort.

***President Proposes Consolidating the Departments of Labor and Education*** – This past summer, President Trump released his White House Reform Plan and Reorganization. It is a lengthy document but there are 3 pages of particular interest to Randolph-Sheppard. The President proposed merging or consolidating the Department of Education, which has jurisdiction over Randolph-Sheppard and Vocational Rehabilitation, with the Department of Labor. At this point, it is only a proposal that would require Congressional approval. The proposal does not appear to be getting much traction at this point, but it is worth watching.

***Need Assistance with Social Security?*** – Last year, when NABM President Nicky Gacos announced a new pilot project to assist blind entrepreneurs who were having difficulty with Social Security over their SSDI, it was felt there was a need for the service. The numbers suggest that is definitely true. Thus far, Michael Dalto, who is a nationally known Social Security expert, has assisted over 30 individuals with remarkable results. Practically everyone who has been referred to him was able to keep or have their benefits reinstated. It remains to be seen if NABM will continue to offer the service long-term. It simply depends on the demonstrated need. If you have a need for assistance, contact Nicky Gacos at [nickycolorado@netscape.net](mailto:nickycolorado@netscape.net) or call him at 1-888-687-6226 and press Extension “4”.

***Rebates! Rebates! Rebates!*** – The rebate program, managed by the RSA Management Group for blind entrepreneurs, continues to grow beyond anyone’s wildest imagination. By leveraging the buying power of all blind entrepreneurs nationwide, RSA Management Group recently sent out approximately \$650,000 in quarterly rebates to blind entrepreneurs nationwide. Do the math. That projects out to \$2.6 Million annually or an average of \$1,300 per blind entrepreneur. And that number will likely only get bigger as volume dictates better deals with manufacturers. For some reason, about one-fourth of the Randolph-Sheppard entrepreneurs are not signed up for rebates. It is free money. You don’t do anything except provide your account numbers to the buying group. They track your purchases and you get your rebate from the

manufacturer. If you are not a member, contact Claudia Lannan by email at [claudial@rsamanagementgroup.com](mailto:claudial@rsamanagementgroup.com) or by phone at 855-978-6800, Extension 1. That little lizard on TV says “Fifteen minutes could save you 15% on your insurance.” Well, in this case, 15 minutes could earn you literally thousands of dollars in rebates.

***Is it Time to Kick Vending Machines Out of the Workplace?*** – Fox News apparently thinks so. The author argues that vending machines offer too easy access to unhealthy snacks and sugary drinks for Americans who are already overweight. The solution? Eliminate the temptation. Get rid of the vending machines. This just goes to prove once again that blind entrepreneurs need to be proactive in offering healthy alternatives for their customers. If this sort of thinking has found its way into Fox News, which is generally a very conservative leaning news outlet, it is time to pay attention. You can read the full article at

[https://www-foxnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/06/29/snack-attack-its-time-to-kick-vending-machines-out-workplace.amp.html?amp\\_js\\_v=0.1&usqp=mq331AQGCAEoATgB#origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&prerenderSize=1&visibilityState=prerender&paddingTop=54&p2r=0&horizontalScrolling=0&csi=1&aoh=15305789585287&viewerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Famp%2Fwww.foxnews.com%2Fopinion%2F2018%2F06%2F29%2Fsnack-attack-its-time-to-kick-vending-machines-out-workplace.amp.html&history=1&storage=1&cid=1&cap=swipe%2CnavigateTo%2Ccid%2Cfragment%2CreplaceUrl](https://www-foxnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/06/29/snack-attack-its-time-to-kick-vending-machines-out-workplace.amp.html?amp_js_v=0.1&usqp=mq331AQGCAEoATgB#origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&prerenderSize=1&visibilityState=prerender&paddingTop=54&p2r=0&horizontalScrolling=0&csi=1&aoh=15305789585287&viewerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Famp%2Fwww.foxnews.com%2Fopinion%2F2018%2F06%2F29%2Fsnack-attack-its-time-to-kick-vending-machines-out-workplace.amp.html&history=1&storage=1&cid=1&cap=swipe%2CnavigateTo%2Ccid%2Cfragment%2CreplaceUrl)

***On the Road Again*** – NABM President Nicky Gacos and NFBEI Director Terry Smith continue to spend a lot of time on the road working on behalf of blind entrepreneurs. Nicky paid a visit to Delaware to work with the SLA and blind entrepreneurs there. Terry attended annual BEP training conferences in Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arizona, and New Hampshire. He was in Nevada helping with revising their program rules. Both Nicky and Terry attended annual training conferences in Tennessee and Georgia, the NAMA Fly-In, and NFB’s National Convention.

***Rice Krispies Treats*** – If you have a blind child, you can now send them to school and include a note of encouragement in his/her lunch box. Thanks to a partnership between Kellogg’s and the National Federation of the Blind, Kellogg’s is making free Braille stickers on the Rice Krispies Treats that parents can use to provide notes of encouragement to their child. An audio box for the treat is also available that allows a parent to record a 10-second message for their child. Learn more at: <https://www.cnet.com/news/rice-krispies-treats-is-making-free-braille-stickers-audio-boxes/>

### ***Dates to Remember***

- October 31 – November 2 – National Council of State Agencies for the

- Blind Fall Conference in Long Beach, California
- November 13-16 – BLAST Conference in San Antonio, Texas.
- January 28-30 - NFB Washington Seminar in Washington, D.C.
- April 10–12 – National Council of State Agencies for the Blind Spring Conference in Bethesda, Maryland
- April 24-26 – National Automatic Merchandising Association One Show in Las Vegas
- July 7-12 – National Federation of the Blind National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada

**Check Us Out on Facebook** – Like the National Association of Blind Merchants on Facebook and keep up with the latest and greatest when it comes to Randolph-Sheppard.

### **Tidbits -**

- Did you know that the Marriot Keybridge Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, where NABM held its events in May, was built in 1957 and was the very first Marriott?
- Coca-Cola and Atlanta are synonymous, but do you know where Coke was actually first bottled? The answer is none other than Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- The grandfather of Congressman Pete Aguilar of California was a Randolph-Sheppard blind vendor.
- Nevada boasts what may be the only Randolph-Sheppard facility in the country with a drive-through window. It is at a local library. Customers can drop off their library books and order a drink or a snack at the same time.
- Starbucks is working on a plan to start accepting Cryptocurrency. Who will be the first blind entrepreneur to follow suit?
- You may be surprised to find a mini vending machine in the car when you take your next Uber ride. The rideshare company is working to bring the concept to market.
- Seattle became the first major city to ban plastic utensils and straws in restaurants. Other cities are expected to soon follow with similar bans.
- Check out the picture of NABM President Nicky Gacos with Grammy Award winning singer Billy Joel on our home page at [www.blindmerchants.org](http://www.blindmerchants.org). The pop star is not the only celeb with whom our Prez has been rubbing elbows.
- NABM sends its sympathies and condolences to the friends and families of two longtime blind entrepreneurs – Kay Riley of Pennsylvania and Ruby Bryant of South Carolina. Both will be missed.
- Did you know the White House press gets their snack fix from machines generating income for the D.C. BEP? Check out this article: <https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonian.com%2F2018%2F08%2F28%2Fthe-white-house-vending-machine-is->

<http://www.compass-usa.com/Ccca1255db4b4e4abb9b08d60e8c90d2/Ccd62b7dd4b4844bd90e7e143a22c8ead/C0/C0/C636712394216891776&sdata=Rjqecy0CRe3BngSKN3zokhxzH66Umb352NonEq0SzQ%3D&reserved=0>

**You Can Still Help** – Do you like what the National Federation of the Blind and NABM are doing to advocate for the program on a national level and to assist individual state programs and blind entrepreneurs? Do you enjoy reading *The Blitz* and being kept informed about what is going on in the Randolph-Sheppard community? If so, we can use your financial support. Over half of our support comes from the NFBEI subscriptions, but we count on donations to make up the rest. If you would like to contribute to the cause, we would welcome your donation. You can donate by sending a check to:

*National Association of Blind Merchants*  
7450 Chapman Highway, #319  
Knoxville, TN 37920

Make the check payable to NABM and write “NFBEI” in the memo portion of the check. Your support is greatly appreciated.

You can also donate by going to our website at [www.blindmerchants.org](http://www.blindmerchants.org) where we have added a new way you can contribute. We can create a bank draft for you so you can sign up for monthly giving. Contact Terry Smith if you are interested in setting up bank draft donations.

If your state is one of the 11 that doesn't subscribe to the services of the NFBEI, we'd welcome your involvement. Terry Smith would be happy to discuss the services with you.

**Share Your News with Everyone**- Help us keep everyone informed about what is happening around the country. Let us hear from you. Tell us what is going on in your state. What is happening in one state affects what is going on in another. NABM and the NFBEI offer the best vehicle to keep everyone updated on what is going on out there.

**GET THE BLITZ-READ THE BLITZ-  
SHARE THE BLITZ**

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE THE BLITZ WITH  
OTHERS AND DISTRIBUTE ON YOUR LISTSERVS. WE  
WANT ALL BLIND ENTREPRENEURS, BEP**

## **ADMINISTRATORS, and OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO KNOW WHAT NABM AND THE NFBEI ARE DOING**

*The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.*