ICBV Office Update

February 21, 2017

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**\*\*1** **Calendar of Events**  
**February 23, 2017 THURSDAY and February 24, 2017 FRIDAY**

**National Council on Disability quarterly meeting**

9:00 AM Eastern, 8:00 AM Central, 7:00 AM Mountain, 6:00 AM Pacific

OVERVIEW:

The **National Council on Disability** (NCD), an independent federal agency, will hold its next **quarterly meeting** in Detroit, Michigan on February 23-24. Interested parties are encouraged to join in person, or by phone in a listening-only capacity (other than during the public comment sessions as noted below).

LOCATION:

The Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center, 400 Renaissance Drive, Detroit, MI 48243

CALL-IN INFORMATION:

Teleconference number: 888-417-8525

Conference ID: 9110702

Conference Title: NCD Meeting

Host Name: Clyde Terry

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Anne Sommers, NCD, 1331 F Street NW., Suite 850, Washington, DC 20004; 202-272-2004 (V), 202-272-2074 (TTY) or write: [PublicComment@ncd.gov](mailto:PublicComment@ncd.gov)

**April 18-21. 2016**

**NAMA and NFBEI/RSA Training in Vegas**

From Terry Smith, NFBEI - Mark your calendars now! The NFBEI and the RSA Management Group will be conducting a half-day training for Randolph-Sheppard stakeholders in conjunction with the NAMA One Show in Las Vegas April 18-21. The One Show is an amazing 3-day event that includes educational seminars, high profile keynote speakers, and the largest exhibit hall in the industry with literally hundreds of companies showing cutting edge equipment and new vend products. The RSA training will be from noon to 5:00 PM on Tuesday, April 18th.

See the following RSA agenda for their training session on Tuesday April 18, 2017 from 2-5 pm the day before the NAMA show in Vegas starts. Exact location to follow.

Topics will include:

Tips on how to increase your rebates

Latest vending technology

Showcase of new vending equipment available

Showcase of new micro market equipment and technology

Additional NAMA info:

Former First Lady Laura Bush To Keynote NAMA's OneShow 2017

**April 22, 2017 Saturday**

The Illinois Association of Blind Students, the student chapter of the NFB of Illinois, presents a **2017 Student Spring Seminar:** BEATING the BARRIERS

WHERE? Holiday Inn Midway: 6624 S. Cicero Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. To reserve your hotel room, call 708-563-6490. Tell the hotel you are booking with the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois for the special rate of $129 per night (plus tax).

HOW MUCH? The Seminar costs only $15 per person. Financial assistance may be available for attendees outside Chicagoland through the NFBI Chappell-Dennis Memorial fund. Please apply by April 1,2017.

HOW TO REGISTER and/or apply for financial assistance: Please register at the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois web site. Follow the links to Spring seminar.

WHY WAIT? Registration ends April 14, 2017.

Special requests and questions should be directed to Emma Meyer at: [MeyerEmma13@gmail.com](mailto:MeyerEmma13@gmail.com) . Sign up to our free listservs (IL-Talk and IABS-Talk) at nfb.org/listserv for updates and info (or to post questions or comments).

SAVE THE DATE:

**September 12-15, 2017**

**NABM BLAST 2017**

Nashville Airport Marriott Hotel

Tradeshow September 13th

Mark Your Calendars Now!!!!

Visit [www.blindmerchants.org](http://www.blindmerchants.org) for more information as it becomes available. For more information, contact Nicky Gacos at [nickycolorado@netscape.net](mailto:nickycolorado@netscape.net) or call him at (908) 464-5359 or contact Terry Smith at [terrysmith@epbfi.com](mailto:terrysmith@epbfi.com) or 865-599-7148.

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**\*\*2** **Shared by SmartBrief on Entrepreneurs - Forbes**

Why We Decided To Sell Our Startup – February 15, 2017

For the last two years, my team and I have been building and commercializing a product that empowers the visually impaired by recognizing what they are looking at using computer vision.

Now, **ThirdEye is being acquired by TheBlindGuide** (see TechCrunch release here). The team is led by a former Merck director whose mother was visually impaired and they’re looking to use ThirdEye to help empower people by creating an organization centered around gathering and building tools for the visually impaired. In fact, they’re going to be hiring visually impaired and disabled programmers to embody the message of empowerment that ThirdEye has always stood for.

During our freshman year at Penn two years ago, Ben Sandler, Joe Cappadona, and I had started ThirdEye at a hackathon; we had built a Google Glass app that would verbally say aloud what’s in front of you when you said “Okay Glass. Recognize this.” Since then, there have been lots of twists and turns, many of which I’ve been detailing on this Forbes column. We had chances to present at CES and The National Wearables Conference, work with organizations like the National Federation of the Blind, learn how to empathetically build products for people who are not us, pitch and have meetings with major CEOs and visionaries, and win competitions like the Wharton Business Plan Competition. I personally had the opportunity with some of the smartest people I know, including my co-founders as well as Daniel Hanover, Nandeet Mehta, and David Ongchoco.

But most important than the thrill of trying to manage a startup during school while not dropping out was gaining empathy with the visually impaired population. Coming in, the reason Ben, Joe and I even decided to work on ThirdEye is that we believed that this technology that could help empower at least some aspects of this group’s lives by 10x. Understanding how visually impaired persons live their lives was not only a humbling exercise but perhaps more importantly, we realized that nobodies with very little resources (ThirdEye was completely bootstrapped) can do something that helps a disempowered group of people . In this regard, a large part of our experience with ThirdEye was figuring out how to get things that normally would have cost tens of thousands of dollars done for free by consistently asking for help and leveraging our student status.

As time went on though we started to realize that while we might have been the right team to start this product, we perhaps weren’t the right team to scale it to all the visually impaired persons around the world. While we became very successful at building products and launching them with very few resources, since we were students we had limited time and also limited experience with the regulatory healthcare space. When a few parties approached us about taking over ThirdEye, we thought hard and decided that it would be for the best.

After a few months of talks with various companies, we decided on TheBlindGuide; given the leadership’s deep understanding of the visually impaired (through their current ecommerce business) and their expertise in healthcare, we decided that their team would be the better team to lead this product forward, especially to international markets.

Ultimately, we were in talks with significantly larger organizations that would almost definitely have more resources, but for them ThirdEye would just be a rounding error; we’re confident, however, that TheBlindGuide will do everything it can to continue on with this product and take it to the next level and exemplify our vision.

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**\*\*3 Shared by Michael Vandervoort, Texas**

FYI - "The following is a CNET article about a visor-like device or maybe like a wearable set of outer glasses, but only for those with low vision.

There is a camera, displays and other electronics that goes on you like glasses but the active part is positioned in front of a person's eyes or a person's normal glasses, if any."

This **'Star Trek'-like headset** helps the legally blind see again. Almost like the VISOR in 'Star Trek,' the **eSight 3** lets low vision wearers do almost anything, from reading a menu to playing basketball.

Wearable Tech: This is part of CNET's "Tech Enabled" series about the role technology plays in helping the disability community.

Picture: Yvonne Felix is walking toward me wearing a device that could be straight out of "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Like Geordi La Forge in the science fiction series, Felix is legally blind.

In the show, La Forge, played by LeVar Burton, wore a headset called VISOR that helped him see again. Felix is wearing its real-world equivalent, the eSight 3.

The eSight 3 has a camera that works with high-resolution displays and optical prisms in the headset to restore sight to those with low vision. The video image is presented to the user in a way that can overcome the cause of their vision loss.

"I remember putting them on and looking up and I saw my husband who I'd been married to for eight years and had never seen before," Felix tells me as we're looking over the San Francisco Bay. "And my 2-month-old son, who we had just brought home from the hospital and he was holding him and it was the most beautiful image, like it's burned in my mind for the rest of my life."

This headset can help solve many accessibility challenges the legally blind face. This headset is an example of how accessibility issues are being solved with technology. It's an increasingly important topic, particularly for tech companies like Apple and Microsoft, who have been pushing to make products easier to use for low vision users. But these solutions still have limitations for the legally blind.

Felix lost her sight after being hit by a car when she was 7 years old. She was diagnosed with Stargardt disease, a juvenile form of macular degeneration. As a result, she has a blind spot that blocks 98 percent of her visual field. Her condition is more suited to eSight than other low vision issues. Macular degeneration and sight loss from diabetes complications are more likely to benefit rather than glaucoma. In these cases, damage to the retina can be greater than eSight can resolve.

Regardless, anyone can give eSight a try. CEO Dr. Brian Mech explained that eSight has a better than 50 percent chance of working with all conditions. "The beautiful thing is it's not surgical, it's not medication, it's not a drug. So you can just try it on."

A clearer view: The liquid lens technology inside the headset helps the camera focus incredibly fast: less than 1 millisecond, similar to the human eye. Combined with a feature Mech calls "bioptic tilt," wearers also get access to their peripheral vision which is important for tasks where you are mobile and moving.

Felix is a longtime user of the device that's currently in its third generation. She's worn previous versions for everyday tasks like shopping, banking and going to work, but she put it to an even more extreme test with vigorous activities like zip lining and riding a mechanical bull.

This controller lets the wearer adjust the image to their liking.

"There are a lot of people out there like me that are going through the same experiences of feeling alone, feeling isolated, and not being a part of the world visually," she said. "Being able to connect with people and your family, and getting out of your house and being part of the world again is something that I would think everybody would want."

A special controller connected to the headset lets wearers adjust the image to their liking. Manipulations include boosting the contrast (which can help edges and objects stand out) or zoom controls to enlarge text. The built-in light can illuminate the scene, useful for low-light situations.

Although eSight has slimmed down the visor from previous generations, Mech believes there's still room for improvement. "I think the day will come where it's not so different than just a regular pair of glasses, or maybe even a pair of contact lenses," he said. "We're not talking 20 years from now, we're talking about maybe in the next five to 10 years."

The company is also looking at waterproofing future versions of the headset. Other devices like magnifying glasses are certainly an option for the legally blind, but in most cases they don't actually improve vision or can only enhance vision for a specific task. Another option is a customized virtual reality headset that may help some low vision conditions.

For now, Felix is more than happy with the freedom she's been given with the headset, even if the design prompts questions and stares from curious onlookers. When I walked through San Francisco's Ferry Building with Felix, at least two sales associates approached her to ask about the device. "I love when people come up and ask me what I'm wearing because it's a door opener," she said. "It allows me to talk about low vision and that there are solutions and low vision hits everybody. You might not have it, but it doesn't discriminate."

Source:

<https://www.cnet.com/news/esight-video-glasses-restores-sight-legally-blind-star-trek-visor-headset/>

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**\*\*4 IAMC Legislative Report** on the 100th General Assembly

2017 Spring Session February 17, 2017

Prepared by BP Consultants for IAMC

The General Assembly was in session this past week with the Governor’s Budget Address on Wednesday, February 15th. The House returns on Wednesday, February 22nd with a focus on committee action. The Senate is not scheduled to return until Tuesday, February 28th.

On Wednesday Governor Rauner gave his Budget Address. He used the speech to break his silence on the Senate’s “grand bargain” and said he is against raising the sales tax on food and medicine and wants a permanent property tax freeze to compensate for a permanent income tax increase. He said he supports the idea contained in the bargain to begin to tax some services but is opposed to the idea of taxing retirement income, as suggested by the Civic Federation. He also called for a worker’s compensation plan that mirrors Massachusetts (“causation” system) and renewed his call for legislator term limits. Rauner said he wants the pension changes proposed by Senate President Cullerton to apply to all of the state-funded pension plans. This week the Senate did not act on any of the bills that are part of the grand bargain compromise package.

Governor Rauner’s FY18 budget plan spends $37.3 billion in general funds ($69 billion all funds) with revenues of $32.7 billion. “The maintenance, auto pilot budget if there were no changes in law would have a deficit of $7.2 billion,” according to Scott Harry, Director of the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget. “But the Governor has requested authority to balance the budget.” To make up the deficit, the plan assumes there will be savings in a variety of areas that require legislative action, including:

$1.3 billion in pension changes through a new, hybrid pension plan available to newly hired workers.

$240 million from the sale of the James R. Thompson Center.

$520 million from changes to state worker group health insurance

$340 million from changes to state purchasing rules

The proposal contains other savings by eliminating or reducing existing funding lines for programs such as immigrant welcoming centers, epilepsy grants, ARC of Illinois Life Span Project, Best Buddies, Project for Autism, Children’s Place, Youth Employment, Teen Reach (after school program), Emergency Food Program, Funeral and Burial Aid, and Teen Parenting Services. The overall savings proposals total about $3 billion, which leaves a gap of about $4.5 billion. The Governor’s proposal said the balance would be covered by components in the Senate’s “grand bargain” that is still being negotiated, including spending cuts, new revenues and some of the Governor’s structural changes.

The Governor’s proposed FY18 budget also included some increases in state spending, such as:

Create a new program to help the elderly who do not receive Medicaid with assistance to remain living at home.

Fund general state assistance for public schools at 100% for the first time in nine years at the cost of $30 million.

Fully fund grants for state transportation reimbursements to schools.

Pay for 2 classes of new State Police troopers.

Increase grants under the Monetary Award Program (MAP) by $36 million to cover an additional 120,000 college students.

Increase child care assistance to cover people earning up to 185% of the federal poverty level (currently 162%).

Hire 50 new employees at the Department of Children and Family Services.

For more details on Governor Rauner’s proposed FY 18 budget, click here: https://www.illinois.gov/gov/budget/Pages/default.aspx

For an analysis of the proposal by the Senate Democrats, click here: http://www.illinoissenatedemocrats.com/images/FINAL\_Gov\_Budget\_Book-021617.pdf

According to Comptroller Mendoza’s office, as of February 16, 2017 the current backlog of general funds payables (outstanding state bills) is $11,940,453,064.60.

On Thursday, St. Clair County Circuit Judge Robert LeChien denied Attorney General Madigan’s motion to dissolve a 2015 court order mandating that the state pay its employees without an appropriation. In response, Attorney General Madigan’s office said that “We think the law is clear. The Illinois Constitution requires an enacted appropriation for state spending. Under the current injunction, the state has spent over $3 billion in taxpayer money without any transparency or legislative debate as required by law. The Governor is using this injunction to avoid following the Constitution and enacting a budget, irreparably harming the people of Illinois. We will appeal the court’s order.” Both AFSCME and Governor Rauner issued statements in support of LeChien’s ruling.

Upcoming Important Dates and Deadlines:

February 22, 2017 – Next Session Date for House

February 28, 2017 – Next Session Date for Senate

March 17, 2017 – Senate Substantive Committee Deadline

March 31, 2017 – House Substantive Committee Deadline

April 8 – 23, 2017 – Spring Break for General Assembly

April 28, 2017 – House Third Reading Deadline for Substantive House Bills and Senate Third Reading Deadline for Substantive Senate Bills

May 12, 2017 – Senate Substantive Committee Deadline for House Bills in the Senate

May 19, 2017 – House Substantive Committee Deadline for Senate Bills in the House

May 26, 2017 – House Third Reading Deadline for Substantive Senate Bills and Senate Third Reading Deadline for Substantive House Bills

Thank you,

Desi Harris

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**\*\*5 From Tom Cullen, Cullen & Associates**

**Session Update** – February 15, 2017

Republican Governor Bruce Rauner delivered his third budget address to the Illinois General Assembly today, calling on all legislators to “think anew and act anew.” The Governor praised the Senate’s recent attempts to forge a bipartisan, “grand compromise” budget plan, calling on all legislators to work together. Rauner acknowledged that he is open to exploring new revenue sources, but cautioned that the State simply cannot tax or cut its way out of this budget crisis.

The Republican Governor proposed $37.3 billion in FY18 general funds spending ($69 billion All Funds operating budget), reflecting a combination of spending reductions and revenue increases, accompanied by business and government reforms. As with last year, this proposal was not viewed favorably by Democrats in the General Assembly, who called upon the Governor to fulfill his duty to present a balanced budget.

The Governor’s proposed budget is predicated upon $32.7 billion in FY18 general funds revenues, leaving a $4.53 billion shortfall between the recommended spending level and available funding. Federal revenues for FY18 are projected to be $3.1 billion, which is $51 million lower than last year. The Governor suggests using a combination of structural reforms, spending reductions, and “additional revenue,” although specific sources of revenue were not identified, to balance the budget. In discussing the Senate proposal, the Governor called for a permanent property tax freeze in general, but particularly if a permanent increase in income tax rates is to be considered. While open to a broader sales tax base, the Governor said he is opposed to increasing the sales tax on food and drugs. He further called for support for raising the earned income tax credit to help low-income families and making the R&D credit permanent.

Re-energizing the economy is Governor Rauner’s number one budget issue. He believes that stopping outward migration and stabilizing the State’s fiscal situation will enhance Illinois’ ability to increase job growth. This includes a hard cap on spending so the State will live within its means, balancing the budget, and paying off the State’s $11 billion debt. The Governor also proposed the following workers’ compensation changes: (1) change compensability of injuries that are primarily unrelated to work; (2) rebalance the medical fee schedule to reduce costs while ensuring access to care; (3) enact cost control measures for prescription drugs and overutilization of physical medicine; (4) permit arbitrators to be assigned to hearing sites outside of Cook County as needed; and (5) establish a commission to update the Workers’ Compensation Act. He also proposes to change the EDGE tax credit, implement the “Cutting the Red Tape Initiative” to improve the licensing process, freeze property taxes, and enact term limits.

In response to the Governor’s speech, House Speaker Michael Madigan issued a statement criticizing the Governor for failing to introduce a balanced budget and suggested that he is using the disadvantaged as negotiating tools. The Speaker further stated that the Democrats are “proposing a new way forward,” noting they want to work cooperatively to pass a full-year budget, improve the economy, and protect the middle class without stripping away worker protections. Senate President Cullerton responded to the Governor’s speech by saying “Right now the Senate is working on this year’s budget because there isn’t one. We need to restore stability and sanity to Illinois’ finances. That begins with a budget for the here and now.”

POLICY TRANSFORMATIONS

The Governor’s proposed budget includes a list of policy transformations, including:

Pension benefit and funding changes. Giving a nod to Senate President John Cullerton’s “Consideration Model” to reform state pension systems as part of a pension solution, Rauner proposed an optional Tier 3 benefit plan for newly- hired employees. He also reiterated his proposal from last year to make 4 changes that would save $750 million: (1) end salary spiking; (2) reallocate pension costs for high-salaried employees; (3) “smooth the impact” on state payments for the systems’ changes in assumptions; and (4) base the funding formula on full payroll. Total FY18 general funds savings from these recommendations is estimated at $1.25 billion from the current law requirement, and it would bring total state general funds pension costs in FY18 down to $8.2 billion. The Governor also proposes to stop funding for health insurance for retirees of TRS or SURS or a health insurance/pension subsidy to the pension fund for Chicago Public School teachers for a savings of $130 million.

State employee group health insurance transformation. Projecting to save approximately $520 million in FY18, the Governor proposes to consider additional group insurance plans to lower state costs, while still meeting ACA parameters. The Governor described state employee health insurance plans as the equivalent of “platinum plus” plans on the Exchange/ACA. The State is also exploring a cost-sharing ratio to incentivize participation in wellness programs to curb the State’s liability for the annual increase in health insurance costs for state employees. The Governor’s proposal also notes that insurance benefits in other states are not typically subject to collective bargaining as they are in Illinois.

State employee compensation. The Governor proposes to save $500 million in FY18 through state payroll changes. Noting that 93% of state employees are unionized representing more than 45,000 state employees, the Governor proposes a 4-year freeze on general and step increases for bargaining unit employees, while still allowing high-performing workers to earn additional wages through a merit bonus system, incentivizing worker productivity. The proposal also calls for changing the threshold for overtime pay from 37.5 hours to 40 hours per week.

Procurement transformation. Several proposed changes to the procurement process are projected to save the state approximately $340 million in FY18 for all state procurement spending, including higher education. The Governor cited cutting the red tape in how the State buys goods and services and implementing best practices and taking advantage of cooperative purchasing opportunities.

Divestment of the James R. Thompson Center. Net proceeds of $240 million in FY18, in addition to hundreds of millions of dollars in savings over the next 10 years, are expected from the proposed sale of the JRTC.

Community Reinvestment Program. Through a package of initiatives, Rauner proposes an FY18 savings of $120 million by implementing a long-term strategy to meet the anticipated growth in the aging population by supporting older adults in their own homes and communities and preventing premature admission to nursing homes and other facilities.

Education transformation. Citing the second straight year of proposing to fund GSA at 100%, Rauner is proposing a new “cradle to career” approach, which comprehensively considers all the support children will need to compete and thrive in tomorrow’s workplace. In addition to a 10% increase in MAP funding for higher education, the Governor proposed increasing funding for English learners and early childhood education and maximizing federal dollars that help build technology infrastructure in schools (additional detail on education below).

Governor’s Cabinet on children and youth. The Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Youth will seek to improve services to children in many different areas (including lead exposure, workforce development for early childhood education, apprenticeship-like programs, etc.) and ensure that taxpayer money is spent efficiently. Many projects and pilot programs will be implemented at DCFS.

Criminal Justice Transformation. To help public safety agencies avoid costs and improve outcomes for offenders and our society, the Governor proposed funding for 2 new state police cadet classes, an increase of $1.6 million to expand adult basic education and general education development programs in prisons to provide offenders the education they need to re-enter the workforce, and new community-based, violence prevention grants, among other things.

Addressing the opioid epidemic. The Governor highlighted the need for a comprehensive strategy: prevention, interdiction and treatment; education, law enforcement and human services; and state, local and federal partnerships to address the opioid crisis.

Medicaid transformation. With one-fourth of the State’s population enrolled in the Medicaid program, the Rauner Adminstration will continue to use strategies to control costs of the program (ie – redetermination, technology, rebalancing LTSS, eliminating fraud, data analytics, etc.). Most items in the Medicaid budget were “lump-summed,” making it difficult to identify funding changes between programs and providers.

Behavioral health transformation. The federal Section 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver will help Illinois improve care, increase efficiency, and reduce costs for behavioral health services.

Bond refinancing transformation. The State took advantage of historically low interest rates and recent legislation to lock in almost $230 million in savings on debt payments.

Technology transformation, Grant Accountability and Transparency Act, and Data Analytics and Tax Collection are other transformative initiatives embraced by the Governor in his FY18 budget proposal.

Illinois path to budget stability remains uncertain. Governor Rauner’s budget proposal is likely dead-on-arrival in the General Assembly. The Senate remains committed to negotiating a grand bargain budget package that combines a spending plan, with new revenue and structural and political reforms for FY17. It is unknown what impact the Governor’s comments will have on the Senate negotiations. But even if the Senate can gather the votes to pass the massive package, its fate in the House remains unclear.

ADDITIONAL DETAIL

MEDICAID

At the human services budget briefing today, it was announced that former Comptroller and now Deputy Governor Leslie Muenger will have an important role with outreach for human service agencies going forward.

Director Norwood provided an overview of the Department of Healthcare and Family Services FY18, $21.9 billion appropriation request ($7.1 billion GRF, $69.8 million less than FY17). While this is a decrease of $429.4 million from last year, the Director stated that there will be no change in programs or services, and these are just “financing changes.”

The Director stated that HFS is the largest insurer in Illinois, covering 3.14 million individuals as of January, 2017. Current enrollment includes: 1.47 million children; 649,346 ACA expansion adults; 230,996 adults with disabilities; 196,703 seniors; and 594,688 other adults.

The FY18 medical assistance budget maintains current eligibility, services, and provider reimbursement rates, including ACA expansion individuals. It also includes initial costs for the 1115 demonstration waiver and assumes that 66% percent of covered individuals are enrolled in risk-based, managed care.

During FY18, HFS will continue its efforts to rebalance the long-term care system. HFS appropriations will be sufficient to allow HFS to continue processing medical assistance bills to the Comptroller’s office on a timely basis.

Federal match paid to Illinois for ACA newly-eligible enrollment was reduced to 95% from 100% on January 1, 2017. It will further reduce to 94% on January 1, 2018 and phase down to 90% on January 1, 2020. The estimated average monthly enrollment in FY17 is 659,100 and in FY18 is expected to grow to 673,100.

FY18 ACA total costs will be $3.11 billion, up from $3.05 billion in FY17. GRF and other funds costs for FY18 will be $2.52 billion ($138.6 million net state cost, up from a $61.8 million state cost in FY17). Cook County costs are $.59 billion ($32.4 million net state cost, up from $14.4 million in FY17).

HFS will also focus on fraud abuse in FY18, providing resources to the Inspector General for quality control on redeterminations and provider claims, data analytics to identify outliers and client behavior, provider payment audits, client asset discovery, and provider and client investigations.

GRF and related fund medical assistance liability grows approximately 1.5% in FY18 over FY17, minus non-discretionary items. The Director explained that FY18 medical assistance cost growth is driven by non-discretionary items, including the annualization of ACA hospital presumptive eligibility growth ($100.9 million state; $121.1 million gross); growth due to recently-enacted heroin laws ($91.9 million state, $147.3 million gross); increases in federal Medicare Part B and D costs ($75.8 million); ACA liability growth ($47.3 million); and annualization of long-term care support services managed care transfers ($43.6 million; $161.7 million gross).

HFS will also continue to transform antiquated technology platforms that will increase efficiency and program integrity. It further plans to strengthen managed care through uniform credentialing, the provider complaint portal, the performance dashboard, and quality report cards.

OTHER PROGRAM AREAS

K – 12 Education: Governor Rauner called for the “implementation of the recommendations of the school funding reform commission”. Rauner’s FY 18 budget is predicated on the existing education funding formula. In his FY 18 budget, Rauner proposes a $213 million increase in K – 12 education funding over last fiscal year. General State Aid funding increases by $30 million, maintaining the foundation funding level ($6,119/student) with no proration for the second year in a row. Early Childhood Education increases by another $50 million over last year and vocational and regular transportation increases by $108 million, eliminating the proration. Student assessments are fully funded and bilingual education increases by $38 million, eliminating the proration. Also included is $5 million for broad band improvements for schools.

Higher Education: FY 18 funding levels for State Universities will be funded at the FY 15 levels minus 15%. A performance funding incentive will allow universities the opportunity to earn back up to 5%. Funding for Community Colleges will be based on the FY 15 levels minus 10%. Despite cuts to State Universities, MAP funding is increased in the proposed FY 18 budget. MAP funding will be based on the FY 15 level plus 10%, increasing MAP funding by $36 million serving an additional 12,000 students. The FY 18 higher education budget assumes the passage of an $830 million FY 17 supplemental appropriation.

Human Services: The FY 18 budget proposes to split the Department on Aging’s’ Community Care program between Medicaid and Non-Medicaid enrollees. The new Community Reinvestment Program is projected to save $120 million over last fiscal year. Other programs not covered by consent decrees are subject to reductions and eliminations that are consistent with previous budget proposals. Early Intervention funding is increased by $4 million allowing the program to serve an additional 700 children. Eligibility for the Child Care program is increased to 185% (currently 162%) of federal poverty level. This increase, however, is dependent upon the passage of a “balanced budget”.

Government Services: Each constitutional officer’s budget would be reduced by 10%. The FY 18 budget includes a projected $500 million in savings from personnel changes based on the Governor’s proposed AFCSME contract, including implementing a 40 hour work week and a wage freeze. A series of procurement reforms are projected to bring $340 million in savings to All Funds ($70 million in savings to GRF). The budget also assumes an additional $105 million in procurement reforms for higher education.

Capital Budget: There are five key components to the Governor’s FY 18 Capital Budget:

Transportation: The FY 18 proposed budget includes a $2.2 billion Pay As You Go Capital Program, which represents a $200 million increase over FY 17.

State Facilities/Deferred Maintenance: The Governor also proposes $150 million for a Department of Correction’s inpatient mental health facility and $50 million for state building maintenance and deferral projects .

Information Technology and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP): The ERP is a planned single statewide technology system for financial reporting, project management, grant management, procurement, case management and human resources. The Governor’s FY 18 budget includes full bonded funding for ERP and an additional $150 million for other information technology projects.

Safe Drinking Water: The Governor supports reducing children’s exposure to lead in paint and drinking water. The FY 18 budget proposes a new childhood lead initiative and provides an additional $84 million for testing and abatement. The Statewide Lead Initiative: (1) resurrects and expands statewide the CLEAR-Win program that helps homeowners abate lead paint in their homes; (2) allow schools to take advantage of lead testing and apply for grants to help alleviate the cost associated with replacing lead pipes inside of buildings; and (3) expands the IEPA Drinking Water Revolving Loan Program to offer low-interest loans for lead abatement.

Sales of the Thompson Center: The State is actively working to sell the James R. Thomson Center in Chicago, which is projected to net over $200 million for the state.

Pensions: Rauner called for the passage of Senate President Cullerton’s “consideration” plan citing the potential savings of over $1 billion. The FY 18 proposed budget includes a projected $1.2 billion in pension savings garnered from two separate proposals. First, the proposed budget estimates $750 million in pension savings associated with reforms previously recommended in FY 17 and include a reduction in salary spiking, a cap on the pension contribution for educational employees and a 5 year asset smoothing. In addition, a new Tier III is proposed to allow new hires to choose between a defined contribution plan and Tier II benefits, netting an estimated $500 million in savings.

Public Safety: The Illinois State Police budget would include funding for two new cadet classes. The Department of Correction’s budget would include funding for the operation of two life skills centers for nonviolent offenders at the end of their sentence; 3 mental health treatment facilities and one inpatient treatment facility. The Governor allocates $118 million in FY 18 to develop a statewide opioid epidemic preparedness and prevention strategy and a system to track incidents of opioid overdoses and increased federal funding to expand methadone treatment of opioid abusers.

Group Health Insurance: The Governor acknowledged the need to address the accelerating cost of state employee and retiree health insurance, arguing that “taxpayers cannot fund a subsidized health care system for state employees when their own premiums are increasing and coverage is decreasing”. Funding for Group Health Insurance for FY 18 is predicated on the implementation of previously proposed reforms, including providing additional coverage options but capping premium assistance. These changes are projected to result in $435 million in General Funds savings. Group Health Insurance funding also assumes a $1.8 billion FY 17 supplemental to pay old bills.

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**\*\*6** **This Week on Eyes On Success**:

1708 **DictationBridge** (Feb. 15, 2016)

Microsoft Windows now comes with built in speech recognition. Unfortunately, on its own, it is difficult to use with a screen reader. DictationBridge is a free program that solves this problem using most popular screen readers. Hosts Nancy and Peter Torpey speak with Lucy Greco, a member of the team that created the technology, about how it works.

The audio and show notes can be found at:

[www.EyesOnSuccess.net](http://www.EyesOnSuccess.net)

The podcast can also be found on itunes.

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**\*\*7** From **Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Seminars@Hadley Presents:

**Braille and Technology: A Winning Combination for Life**

Seminar Date: Thursday, March 2, 2017

Seminar Time: 10:00 AM CST; 16:00 GMT

Have you heard that braille is becoming obsolete due to accessible technology? We are here to tell you that is just not true! Research shows that adults with visual impairments who are braille readers are both more employable and successful.

Maybe your vision isn’t as good as it used to be. Maybe you now have very little usable vision or, as some may say, “just enough vision to get you in trouble.” If so, braille will be your buddy in every aspect of life, and technology will add an additional tool to help you live a fuller life.

Join Seminars@Hadley as our panelists discuss how technology and braille work together for a winning combination for life! Special guests Kathy Claus, professional storyteller and author; Kristen Witucki, the curriculum and content editor for Learning Ally’s College Success Program; and Susan Kennedy, a legal assistant and travel blogger, will share how they balance braille and technology in their everyday lives.

Kim Walker, Hadley Instructor, will moderate this 60-minute discussion. A question and answer session will be included as part of this audio seminar. Register now for Braille and Technology! <http://www.hadley.edu/SeminarDetails.asp?sid=353>

**Study Tips for Distance Learners**

Hadley’s distance education courses give students the flexibility to study anytime, anywhere. The trick is staying on top of your lessons! Doing so requires being organized, disciplined and staying committed to your studies. Developing good study habits now will not only keep you ahead of the game in your education, but also will be useful in managing your work and life. With this in mind, we’ve put together some tips to help you get the most out of your studies. Read Study Suggestions from Hadley’s student handbook and prepare yourself for success! <http://www.hadley.edu/ACE-studenthandbook.asp?content=SS>

**iFocus Videos: Getting the Most from Your Apple Device**

Whether you're on an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch, Hadley's iFocus series of instructional videos gets you up to speed quickly and ensures you're getting the most out of your device. iFocus videos are quick lessons on how to use the built-in iOS vision accessibility features you use daily. Topics range from turning on & off VoiceOver and reading an iBook to using the magnifier and creating new folders. Browse the list of iFocus topics and get started today! <http://hadley.edu/InstructionalVideos.asp#iFocus>

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**\*\*8** **From the NFB Newsletter**

**National Federation of the Blind Scholarship Program History**

The National Federation of the Blind has long been dedicated to helping blind people overcome obstacles to achieve their dreams. One of the ways that the Federation empowers blind people to live the lives they want is by recognizing the achievements of blind scholars. Since 1965 the NFB has been granting merit-based college scholarships to blind students living and studying in the United States (and in Puerto Rico since 1992). The year 2017 marks the fifty-second anniversary of this long-standing and important program, which to date has awarded over nine hundred scholarships and distributed over $3 million dollars.

Over the years, the program has grown to become one of the most coveted suite of scholarships available to blind students, receiving over five hundred applications last year; but like most programs, it started small. In 1965 there were two scholarships for up to $300 per student awarded, which would be equivalent to receiving $2,274 in 2016. The first scholarship application asked for nothing more than the student’s transcripts and a 250-word statement on why they were applying and how the scholarship would help them achieve their goals. No proof of blindness was requested. As the program developed more scholarships were added, the amounts the Federation awarded grew, and both the application requirements and the competition increased.

In 2016 the NFB awarded $124,000 in scholarships, with amounts ranging from $3,000 to $12,000 per student. Awards are based on academic achievement and leadership potential. Since 1971 these qualities have been evaluated through attendance at the NFB’s annual convention, where winners get to interact with blind attendees and receive mentoring opportunities with the scholarship committee members, all of whom are blind themselves. The committee uses these interactions to make the final determination of which student will receive each award. And while many Federation leaders have been former winners, membership has never been a requirement for applying or winning an NFB scholarship.

Now the NFB Scholarship Program annually provides thirty scholars, ranging from high school seniors to graduate students, with the ability to make their education goals a reality. Many of their stories are chronicled in the pages of the Braille Monitor, the flagship publication of the Federation. Some scholarships are donated by people in memory of a deceased loved one, some by NFB members, and some are funded by entities wishing to contribute to the educational success of blind students.

**National Federation of the Blind National Scholarships Today**

The 2017 scholarship application season is open now. The National Federation of the Blind will award thirty scholarships on July 15, 2017, at the annual banquet that culminates the NFB National Convention. More than $100,000 is awarded each year.

Winners’ goals are wide ranging. Members of the 2016 class aspired to become an actuary, research scientist, educator, attorney, and biochemist, just to name a few. Listen to the 2016 winners present during national convention from the NFB website. One scholarship winner, Jameyanne Fuller, introduced herself by saying, “I spent a year teaching English in Assisi, Italy, on a Fulbright scholarship, and then I spent another year volunteering for the New Hampshire Disability Rights Center. This year I will be a first-year law student at Harvard Law School. I am very interested in studying and hopefully practicing in the area of disability law and policy. This is my very first NFB Convention experience. I want to say thank you so much to everyone who has welcomed me so warmly and enthusiastically.” Read what all of our 2016 winners had to say in the Braille Monitor article.

Past winners tell us that the national convention experience affords higher value than the money. “Imagine a place where there are 2,500 people using white canes and guide dogs, a place where the sighted person in the room is in the minority, a place where you feel accepted, loved, and supported. I found this place at the National Federation of the Blind’s National Convention. I was fortunate enough to be one of the NFB’s 2016 scholarship winners.” Read more in "National Convention Reflections" by Deanna Greco and Laura Etori in the Fall 2016 edition of The Sounding Board.

**Call to Action: What Can You Do to Help?**

Please share the link to NFB scholarships, <https://nfb.org/scholarships> . Anyone who is legally blind and will be enrolled in a degree program in the fall of 2017 should apply.

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**\*\*9 Burdette Beckman Top Selling LSS from Herr’s**

57 30 1.5OZ Baby Back Rib

794 30 1.5OZ Creamy Dill

164 30 1.5OZ Ragin Ranch

211 30 1.5OZ Hot Sauce

762 30 1.125 Jalapeno Kettle

8100 1.23OZ Jalapeno Popper Curls

6120 30 1.125OZ Cheddar Horseradish Kettle

826 30 1.5 OZ SCO CHP

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**\*\*10** **RSA Management Group Information**

FRITO NEWS ITEM DEALS (Purchase at least one case of either news item to meet News Item requirement)

Products

1.75 oz Chester’s Fries Bacon Cheddar – 64

1.375 oz Lay’s Kettle Chips Original-64 count – UPC 61178

RSA Management Purchase Power Deals

Earn Extra Rebates on the following:

NEW DEALS THIS WEEK

FERRERO – FEBRUARY OFF INVOICE PROMOTION PLUS 10% REBATE

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Rebates Products

$30.00 per case Tic Tacs Singles–Freshmints, Orange, Fruit Adventure and Wintergreen

$30.00 per case Tic Tacs Mixers–Cherry Cola and Pina Colada

$9.45 per case Tic Tac Bottlepack – Fruit Adventure, Orange and Freshmint

$24.00 per case Ferrero Rocher 3 piece

AQUAFINA – ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY, 2017 – DELIVERED BY MARCH 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.00 per case 20 oz. Aquafina 24 count

CHEESEWICH

Deal Date: THROUGH MARCH 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.44 per case Cheesewich Meat and Cheese Snacks– All Products

STARBUCKS

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY, 2017 –DELIVERED BY MARCH 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.00 per case 13.7 oz. Starbucks Frappuccino – ALL FLAVORS

TAYLOR CANDY

Deal Date: THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2017

Rebates Products

4% per case Taylor Candy – All Products

WOLFGANG PUCK COFFEE PODS

Deal Date: THROUGH MARCH 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.00 per case Wolfgang Puck Coffee Pods – All Products

Deals ending in February

FERRERO – FEBRUARY OFF INVOICE PROMOTION

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Rebates Products

$30.00 per case Tic Tacs Singles–Freshmints, Orange, Fruit Adventure and Wintergreen

$30.00 per case Tic Tacs Mixers–Cherry Cola and Pina Colada

$9.45 per case Tic Tac Bottlepack – Fruit Adventure, Orange and Freshmint

$24.00 per case Ferrero Rocher 3 piece

PEPSI ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: THROUGH JANUARY 31 – DELIVERY BY FEBRUARY 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.50 per case 20 oz. Mountain Dew – ALL FLAVORS EXCEPT REGULAR AND DIET

$2.00 per case Lipton Teas – ALL FLAVORS – INCLUDING INNOVATION

$2.00 per case 15.2 oz. Ocean Spray – ALL FLAVORS

$2.00 per case 12 oz. Starbucks Refreshers – ALL FLAVORS

PEPSI INNOVATION PRODUCTS ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.00 per case Kickstart 12 oz. Hydration Raspberry Citrus

$2.00 per case Kickstart 16 oz. Mango Lime

$2.00 per case Propel 20 oz. Watermelon Flavored Water

$2.00 per case Lipton 20 oz. Mango Tea

$2.00 per case Lipton Pure Leaf 18.5 oz. Pomegranate or Mint Flavor Tea

PEPSI – ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY, 2017 –DELIVERED BY MARCH 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.00 per case 20 oz. Wild Cherry and Diet Wild Cherry Pepsi - 24 count

$2.00 per case 18.5 oz Lipton Pure Leaf Tea 12 count– ALL FLAVORS

$2.00 per case 16 oz. AMP 12 count – ALL FLAVORS

AQUAFINA – ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY, 2017 –DELIVERED BY MARCH 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.00 per case 20 oz. Aquafina 24 count

STARBUCKS

Deal Date: THROUGH FEBRUARY, 2017 –DELIVERED BY MARCH 7, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.00 per case 13.7 oz. Starbucks Frappuccino – ALL FLAVORS

Deals ending in March

FRITO

Deal Date: THROUGH MARCH 5, 2017 - DELIVERY BY MARCH 18, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.92 per case Rold Gold and Rold Gold Thins – ALL FLAVORS

PEPSI ORDER THROUGH AUTHORIZED PBC ONLY

Deal Date: DELIVERY MARCH 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$3.00 per case 1L and 700mL Lifewtr 12 ct. – UPC 12000161155 and 12000161162

Deals ending in April

OTIS SPUNKMEYER

Deal Date: THROUGH APRIL 30, 2017

Rebates Products

$1.20 per case 4 oz. Wild Blueberry, Banana Nut and Chocolate Chip Muffin 24 ct.

Deals ending in June

OREO

Deal Date: DELIVERY JUNE 30, 2017

Rebates Products

$0.2 per unit Oreo Chocolate Bar

Deals ending in December

PLANTERS

Deal Date: DELIVERY BY DECEMBER 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$2.88 per case 2 oz. Planters Peanuts

$1.44 per case Planters Trail Mix Nut and Chocolate

SPLENDA

Deal Date: THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$3.30 per case Splenda 4/400 ct. Sweetener Packets

$3.00 per case Splenda 2000 ct. Bulk and 12/50 ct. Sweetener Packets

$2.60 per case Splenda 12/100 ct. Sweetener Packets

$1.25 per case Splenda 500 ct. Bulk Sweetener Packets

WELCH’S

Deal Date: DELIVERY BY DECEMBER 31, 2017

Rebates Products

$.01 per unit Welch’s, Gummi Factory, Sour Jacks, Sun-Maid, Fisher – ALL FLAVORS

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