ICBV Office Update

April 24, 2017

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**\*\*1** **Calendar of Events**

**April 25, 2017**

ICBV Members – This is the cutoff date to make your Spring Conference hotel reservations. Abraham Lincoln (Doubletree Hilton) Hotel in Springfield, Illinois. The telephone number is 217-544-8800

**May 4 – 6 2017**

**Illinois BEPB/ICBV Spring Election Committee Meetings**

Abe Lincoln Hotel, Springfield IL

SUBJECT: Upcoming ICBV Meeting, Election and Training Conference

We are looking forward to meeting with all of you at the upcoming Training Conference being held at the President Abraham Lincoln (Doubletree Hilton) Hotel in Springfield, Illinois. The telephone number is 217-544-8800.

On Friday, May 05, 2017 the Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors (ICBV) will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

On Friday, May 05, 2017 starting at 7:00 p.m. the ICBV will hold their annual election. A roll call of attendance will be conducted. Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. and we expect to have the election completed by 9:00 p.m. Attached is a copy of the 2017 Illinois Committee of Blind Vendor’s list of Incumbents and Nominee form. We will be conducting a general business meeting and distributing trust fund checks at the conclusion of the election.

On Saturday, May 06, 2017 registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. with a roll call of attendance at 9:00 a.m. and a half day training session. We will conclude with our Leadership luncheon. You should have already informed BEPB if you will have a guest and your $25.00 should already be on its way to the ICBV office on Jackson.

Illinois Members - Please remember that your attendance at our annual training session is required and part of your ongoing certification.

**May 23, 2017**

**NABM Day on the Hill**

The National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM), a division of the National Federation of the Blind, will be holding a Day on the Hill on May 23, 2017. You can expect details to in the next few days. For now, mark your calendar to come to Washington, D.C. on Monday the 22nd so you can make your Hill visits on the 23rd. You should be able to get out of town late that afternoon or early evening.

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.

**July 17-28 2017**

The National Federation of the Blind is excited to offer its **Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning Program,** BELL, this summer in Illinois. This is a great opportunity for Braille skills to be addressed in a fun and new environment.

Where: The Chicago Lighthouse 1850 W. Roosevelt Rd. Chicago, Il 60608

When: Monday- Friday, July 17-28 2017

Times: 8:30-3:30

Cost: $50

For more information please visit: <https://nfb.org/BELL-academy>

**July 31- August 4, 2017**

The National Federation of the Blind is excited to offer its **Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning Program**, BELL, this summer in Illinois. This opportunity will be a weeklong residential program on Illinois State University’s campus.

Where: Springfield, IL

Who: Blind child/Parent pairs

Cost: $50

For more information please visit: <https://nfb.org/BELL-academy>

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**\*\*2** From Terri Smith, NFBEI

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

BLIND ENTREPRENEURS INITIATIVE

**THE BLITZ**

Winter, 2017

It has been awhile since we got out The Blitz. The one we did in January was actually the NFBEI annual report for 2016. If you missed it, you can read it on our website at <http://blindmerchants.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NFBEI-Annual-Report16-1.pdf> . There is a lot to report in terms of happenings with the National Federation of the Blind and National Association of Blind Merchants over the last few months so let’s get to it.

Register Now for the Music City BLAST – Registration is now open for our 2017 BLAST (Business Leadership and Superior Training) Conference. It will be a Music City BLAST September 12-15 at the Nashville Airport Marriott Hotel. We will be returning to the site of the 2011 BLAST. In announcing the Nashville event, NABM President Nicky Gacos said, “For the last 5 plus years, we’ve been asked many times when are we going back to Nashville? We can now say it will be in 2017.” Remarkably, that’s just 5 months away and will be here before you know it so register now. Nashville is a fun city and we plan on making it a fun and informative experience for everyone who attends. And who knows? You may even get to hear a little country music. We are returning to our traditional format with a full-day of BEP staff training on Tuesday, September 12th and pre-conference seminars starting that same day. Staff will want to plan on arriving on Monday and we’d suggest many of the others do the same. We are also bringing back our Randolph-Sheppard Women’s breakfast on Thursday, September 14th and it will feature Pam Allen, Director of the Louisiana Center for the Blind and 1st Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind. Register now by going to our website at http://blindmerchants.org/blast-only-2017-registration/ . Whether you are an attendee, an exhibitor, or a sponsor, you can get it done on the website.

Rest Areas Take Center Stage – Over the last several months, issues related to interstate vending have taken center stage and are receiving a great deal of attention from NABM and the NFBEI. Commercialization has raised its ugly head again. Here is a brief synopsis of some of the issues we are following:

Indiana Congressman Wants to Commercialize Rest Areas – Here we go again. A freshman Congressman, Jim Banks, of Indiana is asking fellow members of Congress to sign on to a bill he plans to introduce that would allow commercialization of rest areas. He sees it as a way to generate revenue for the states to help keep the rest areas open and to fund other programs in the states. As The Blitz goes to press, the bill hasn’t been introduced but is expected to drop very soon. The good news is he is a freshman and isn’t on any of the relevant committees. The bad news is it could get support from some key members and pick up momentum quickly. We don’t’ want to over react but we don’t want to take it lightly either. We need all blind entrepreneurs to call their member of Congress and ask them NOT to sign on to the bill and to oppose it. We have already mobilized our Indiana entrepreneurs and are already working against the bill. We also hope to leverage contacts the NFB has made with members of the Transportation Committee while working on the driverless car issues.

FHWA Seeks Comments on Commercialization – The Federal Highway Administration sought comments in regards to vending and the possibility of expanded commercialization. We oppose any expanded commercialization because it could be devastating to businesses owned by blind entrepreneurs and who service vending machines at interstate rest areas. Almost 20% of the nation’s Randolph-Sheppard vending facilities are located at interstate rest areas. Many states rely on income from third party vending at these sites to fund their programs. However, there is a lot of interest in seeing changes and we need to protect against that. NABM President Nicky Gacos submitted comments on behalf of our organization and we rallied several other rest area vendors to submit comments. In total, 195 comments were submitted and the vast majority were in opposition to expanded commercialization. 85 of these were submitted by blind entrepreneurs and 17 by SLA’s. To view NABM’s comments, go to http://blindmerchants.org/nabm-comments-rest-area-commercialization/ .

New York Pushing the Envelope – The New York State Department of Transportation decided to ignore the law and put in an over-the-counter operation selling Made in New York products at two rest areas. The law clearly only allows retail sales through vending machines but this didn’t stop the NYSDOT. To its credit, the FHWA directed the NYSDOT to cease the over-the-counter sales but did grant temporary permission for them to switch to a self-checkout system until such time as the FHWA can issue guidance on what is permissible under vending. We had several questions. First, by what authority did the FHWA allow the NYSDOT to use a self-checkout system when the law clearly only allows sales by vending machines? Did NYSDOT first offer the opportunity to the New York BEP as required by the Kennelly Amendments? Is the FHWA foreshadowing the guidance it plans to issue? The NFBEI was concerned and NABM President Nicky Gacos wrote to the FHWA to express our concerns. We are awaiting a response and hopefully an opportunity to have some dialogue on the issue.

Connecticut Closing Rest Areas – As part of a budget reduction measure, the Governor in Connecticut has proposed closing several interstate rest areas. This move will cost the BEP approximately $137,000 which it uses to support the program. NABM and NAMA have joined forces to fight the closures. It is an uphill battle but the blind entrepreneurs and the NAMA lobbyist are doing their best to salvage the rest areas.

To Toll or Not to Toll – The idea of converting the interstate highways to toll roads is gaining momentum. Current law allows 4 states to do pilot projects and Indiana is the closest of the 4 to actually do it. NABM opposes tolling and has joined forces with the National Association of Truck Stop Operators (NATSO) and others to fight tolling. Our fear is that tolls will result in less traffic on the interstates which means fewer visitors to the rest areas which means fewer patrons for the vending machines which means less money in the pockets of blind guys. It is in our best interest to join forces with others to fight these tolls.

DoD – The Senseless Battles Rage On – We could do a special issue of The Blitz on just DoD and Randolph-Sheppard. We will keep it short and just hit the highlights.

DoD Rulemaking – Who knows what the heck is going on with the proposed rules? DoD isn’t saying. What we do know is we expected final rules to be published as early as September. The more than 5,000 comments that we generated slowed that process down. President Trump’s moratorium on new rules delayed them further. DoD insiders are saying the rules will be published in April but we don’t have much confidence in that information. However, it does appear DoD intends to move forward if possible. We continue to use political pressure and back channels to try to prevent the rules from ever seeing the light of day. It remains to be seen what will happen but our biggest fear is our friends at AbilityOne will get stronger language put in the NDAA which is what we have to guard against. See the notes below on NABM’s plans for a fly-in.

Fort Bliss – At Fort Bliss, the Army is attempting to split the contract and take part of the contract away from the blind entrepreneur and award the dining facility attendant services to another company. An arbitration panel ruled the Army’s action did not violate the Randolph-Sheppard Act. The State of Texas has appealed the ruling to federal court. The SLA is optimistic with its chances to get the panel’s decision overturned. Getting federal courts to weigh in or our side is critical.

Fort Campbell – The federal judge has finally lifted the stay on the arbitration panel ruling that stated the Kentucky SLA was entitled to a priority to operate the DFA contract at Fort Campbell. This clears the way for Kentucky to assume that contract. The battle is probably not over but the judge’s ruling is a positive development.

Eglin Air Force Base – This case centered around the Air Force’s failure to not set a competitive range when bidding out the dining contract at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. It claimed the SLA’s bid was not reasonable and it awarded the contract to the lowest bid. In a rather odd decision, the arbitration panel ruled that the SLA had slept on its rights to appeal because it knew a competitive range wasn’t going to be set and that it should have filed for arbitration at that point rather than waiting until it did not get the contract.

Fort Sam Houston - In February, an arbitration panel found that the Air Force’s decision to exclude Texas from the competitive range violated the Randolph-Sheppard Act because the Contracting Officer failed to properly apply the criteria set forth in the solicitation. Critically important to this finding was the panel’s determination that the panel owed no deference to the Contracting Officer’s decision. It had to be supported by the evidence. The Air Force was directed to include Texas in the competitive range and commence negotiations with it. In a parallel case at the Court of Claims, an attorney for the Air Force informed the Court that the Air Force would “generally” not comply with the dictates of the arbitration decision. After some hard questioning by the court, the Assistant Attorney General disavowed those statement and agreed that the selection process would be reopened, Texas would be included in the competitive range and the Air Force would follow the RSA. The parallel action in the Court of Claims was then dismissed without prejudice.

Fort Sill and Fort Riley Pending – We are waiting on decisions in the two most recent arbitration cases. The issue at Fort Sill is similar to Fort Bliss in that the Army is splitting out some of the DFA services. At Fort Riley, the Army is claiming the contract is for DFA services and not subject to the Randolph-Sheppard priority. Terry Smith with the NFBEI provided expert testimony in both cases. One very interesting development in the Fort Riley case was that the Army admitted it changed the scope of work simply to avoid the Randolph-Sheppard priority. That says volumes about DoD’s attitude toward Randolph-Sheppard.

To read the rest of the Blitz follow this link:

<http://blindmerchants.org/blitz-winter-2017/>

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**\*\*3** Shared by Denise Avant, NFBI President

Here is some **important information** I thought you would like to know. Please see below.

**Access Technology Affordability Act of 2017**:

The Access Technology Affordability Act of 2017 was introduced in both houses of Congress (H.R. 1734, S. 732). The bill was introduced by

Representatives David Young (R-IA) and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) in the House and by Senators John Boozman (R-AR) and Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) in the Senate. The legislation will establish a per-person individual refundable tax credit to be used over a multi-year period to offset the cost of access technology for blind people. Access technology includes items such as text-to-speech screen-access software and electronic Braille displays that blind people use to access computers, tablets, smartphones, and other devices, as well as digital content. More information can be found in the press release

<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-applauds-introduction-access-technology-affordability-act> .

**AIM HIGH Act Introduced**:

And, in other legislative news, the Accessible Instructional Materials in

Higher Education Act of 2017, also known as the AIM HIGH Act (H.R. 1772) was introduced by Congressman Phil Roe (R-TN) and Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT). This act will promote instructional technology and content that are accessible to the blind and other students with print disabilities. The entire press release is available at

<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-applauds-introduction-aim-high-act>

**Lyft Press Release**:

Yesterday we sent out a joint press release with Lyft announcing a collaborative effort to ensure reliable and equal service to individuals who are blind and use service animals. Also, Lyft announced the kick-off of their first Service Animal Month. Lyft also announced a new policy that clarifies that every Lyft rider who has a service animal must be accommodated, regardless of a driver's preferences or circumstances. The full text is available on the NFB website

<https://nfb.org/lyft-and-national-federation-blind-announce-comprehensive-accessibility-improvements-lyft-riders-who> .

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**\*\*4** Shared via Nfbnet

**National Federation of the Blind Proud to Present Documentary on Blind Youth**

**Do You Dream in Color? Tells Stories of Blind Students**

Baltimore, Maryland (April 4, 2017): The National Federation of the Blind, in collaboration with the filmmakers, is proud to present Do You Dream in Color?, a new, critically acclaimed documentary about blind youth and the educational and societal challenges they face. The film, directed by Abigail Fuller and Sarah Ivy, is available through video-on-demand platforms from Uncork’d Entertainment, and public screenings are being planned.

Connor, Nick, Sarah, and Carina are like most teenagers navigating the growing pains of high school, but unlike their peers these four teens face another challenge – they’re blind. Do You Dream in Color? is a poignant coming of age story that captures the inspired journeys of four courageous teenagers as they strive to achieve their goals: to be a sponsored skateboarder, to travel the world, to become a rock star and to be the first family member to graduate high school. Their extraordinary stories shine a provocative light on both the social and institutional obstacles faced by people who are blind in the sighted world and what it takes to surmount these barriers.

Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "This film is a beautiful and powerful chronicle of four young people striving to achieve their goals and live the lives they want in the face of the low expectations and misconceptions that too often erect barriers between blind people and our dreams. In particular, the film accurately portrays the ways in which our public education system fails blind students. Watching it deeply moved me and made me more determined, as a blind person, a father of blind children, and the leader of the National Federation of the Blind, to fight all the harder for young people like the courageous, focused, and charismatic teens we see on screen. The National Federation of the Blind is pleased and proud to work with the makers and distributors of this well-crafted and enlightening movie to bring it to a wider audience. This collaboration is a natural fit for us because the film highlights the need for our continuing work to promote Braille literacy, expand opportunities for blind students in STEM education, advocate for equal access to educational technology, and fight for the legal and civil rights of blind students throughout the nation. We believe that the stories told in this film will spark discussion and enhance understanding of the true challenges faced by the blind, as well as demonstrating that blindness itself is not the characteristic that defines an individual or his or her future."

A winner with film festival audiences and critics, garnering major awards at the Dallas International Film Festival, San Luis Obispo International Film Festival, and Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Do You Dream in Color? has been described as “powerfully human" by Truth on Cinema and as "a film that will touch your head and your heart" by Unseen Films.

For more information, including the trailer and where and how to experience the film, visit [www.doyoudreamincolor.com](http://www.doyoudreamincolor.com) .

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**\*\*5 This week on Eyes On Success**

**1715 Audio Book Narrator** (Apr. 5, 2017)

You've probably heard her voice on a Talking Book from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Martha Harmon Pardee has narrated over 3,000 books for the NLS. Hosts Nancy and Peter Torpey talk with her about the process of recording audio books, notable moments in her career, and what else she does as a professional voice artist.

**1716 When You Have a Story to Tell** (Apr. 12, 2017)

Even as a child, Jo Elizabeth Pinto enjoyed writing. Now, what started as a

few chapters in high school, has grown into her debut novel, "The Bright

Side of Darkness." Hosts Nancy and Peter Torpey talk with her about the

experiences that led her to write this book about a brave young blind girl

and her unlikely friend, and also about getting it published.

**1717 Encore of 1308 Progress in Speech Synthesis** (Apr. 19, 2017)

Much adaptive technology relies on speech synthesis, which has evolved from humble beginnings to nearly human sounding speech. Hosts Nancy Goodman Torpey and Peter Torpey talk with Andrew Breen, director of innovation for text to speech at Nuance Communications, about the history, current technology and future goals of speech synthesis.

The audio and show notes can be found at:

[www.EyesOnSuccess.net](http://www.EyesOnSuccess.net) and on iTunes!

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**\*\*6** Shared by Flying Blind, LLC

**Apple Releases iOS 10.3; Bringing a Number of VoiceOver Fixes, but also Introducing at Least One New Bug of Note**

<https://www.applevis.com/blog/apple-ios-news/apple-releases-ios-103-bringing-number-voiceover-fixes-also-introducing-least>

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**\*\*7** **IMAC Legislative Report** on the 100th General Assembly

2017 Spring Session April 21, 2017 Prepared by BP Consultants For IAMC

The attached Legislative Report includes legislation from the 2017 Spring Session of the 100th General Assembly. This report has been prepared by BP Consultants on behalf of IAMC.

Both chambers have been on Spring Break for two weeks. The House returns Monday, April 24th and the Senate returns Tuesday, April 25th. The deadline to pass substantive bills on Third Reading is Friday, April 28th. Attached is the committee schedule for the Week of April 24th.

The House and Senate both held several subject matter only committee hearings during the break. Some of the subjects covered included testimony on the FY18 budget from state agencies and advocacy groups, legalization of marijuana, telecommunications and tax credits.

Both Moody’s Investors Service and S&P Global Ratings have warned that Illinois’ credit rating could be downgraded again, while investors are already demanding higher yields on its bonds than they do from borrowers that are on the cusp of junk, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. “It’s getting harder and harder to find a reason to be optimistic for a budget,” said Ty Schoback, a senior analyst in Minneapolis at Columbia Threadneedle Investments LLC, which holds some Illinois debt among its $22 billion of municipal holdings. “That being said, this is politics — you can’t predict. Two years ago, we were debating whether or not Illinois falls into BBB. Today, we’re debating whether it falls to junk status. If the status quo persists, what are we going to be debating in two years?” Both Moody’s and S&P have warned of further credit deterioration if Illinois enters a third year without a spending plan. Both companies rank Illinois only two steps above junk with negative outlooks, signaling the rating could fall again. No U.S. state general-obligation bonds have ever been rated below investment-grade, according to data going back to at least 1970.

According to Reuters, Illinois’ budget crisis dragged down the credit ratings of six state public universities and Chicago’s community college system on Thursday in a slew of downgrades by S&P Global Ratings. The rating for the University of Illinois, the state’s largest system, fell one notch to A after S&P determined it could only be three notches above the state’s BBB rating. S&P also warned of a further downgrade if the state failed to fund the system beyond a stopgap amount of $356 million approved last June. “Given the budget impasse of fiscal 2016, ongoing fiscal 2017 budget impasse, and the absence of an agreement among elected leaders, it is our opinion that state appropriations to public universities in Illinois will remain uncertain in the intermediate term,” S&P said in a report. Southern Illinois University’s credit rating was dropped into the junk level of BB from BBB, while ratings for Northeastern Illinois and for Eastern Illinois universities fell deeper into junk, at B, from BB. Western Illinois University’s rating was cut to BB-minus from BBB-minus and Governors State University’s rating was downgraded to BB from BB-plus. S&P also lowered the rating four notches to BBB from A-plus for the City Colleges of Chicago, which operates seven community colleges. As a result, Illinois now has five universities with junk bond status. The ratings were placed on a watch list for a potential subsequent downgrades.

Upcoming Important Dates and Deadlines:

April 24, 2017 – Next Session Date for House

April 25, 2017 – Next Session Date for Senate

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

May 31, 2017 – Scheduled Adjournment

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**\*\*8** **Cullen & Associates Sessions Update** from April 7th

The Illinois General Assembly has adjourned for the week and will take a two-week, spring break. The House returns to session on Monday, April 24th, and the Senate will reconvene on Tuesday, April 25th. Friday April 28th is the Third Reading deadline in both Chambers, leaving only one session week to pass substantive legislation out of the first Chamber.

House Democrats approved a “lifeline” budget bill (HB 0109 (HFA 0001) (Greg Harris)) this week that appropriates more than $800 million from the Commitment to Human Services Fund and the Education Assistance Fund. The legislations is designed to help social service providers and state universities in the absence of a more comprehensive budget for the remainder of the fiscal year. The appropriations from the funds are limited to their expected revenues in the second half of the fiscal year and equal roughly 1/3rd of what the programs would receive in a typical fiscal year. The legislation specifically appropriates $258 million to human service entities that were appropriated funds in the original “stop gap” appropriation last year, as well as funding for domestic violence shelters and the “Safe from the Start” Program. Additionally, $559 million is appropriated to higher education, including funding of MAP grants for the fall of 2016 and part of the spring of 2017 and grant monies for state universities. The legislation, which was approved by a vote of 64-45-1, now heads to the Senate where its fate is uncertain, as the Senate was not involved in its drafting. The Senate has previously stated that it prefers a more comprehensive solution to the State’s budget crisis, and while the bipartisan “grand bargain” plan is currently stalled in the Senate, there is still hope amongst some in that Chamber that it can be revived. Governor Rauner responded to the House Democratic plan by saying that he is not in favor of another “stop gap” budget because it will lead to higher state debt and higher taxes down the road.

The Illinois Supreme Court denied Governor Rauner’s request to hear a direct appeal of the Illinois Labor Relations Board (ILRB) ruling on the question of whether the Governor and AFSCME are at an impasse in their contract negotiations. The Union’s appeal of the ILRB ruling will now be heard as scheduled in the Fourth District Appellate Court. Last September, the ILRB ruled that the Governor and AFSCME were at an impasse in their contract negotiations, which allowed the Governor to impose his last, best, and final contract offer.

Two Cook County gaming “cafes,” Illinois Care and Services Co. and Laredo Hospitality Ventures, filed a lawsuit against the Illinois Gaming Board on Tuesday in Cook County Circuit Court. The lawsuit challenges provisions in the 2009 video gaming law requiring bars, restaurants and gambling parlors to share 50% of after-tax profits with terminal operators and provisions that prevent local businesses from purchasing and operating their own terminals. The lawsuit also challenges recent changes to the statute that shift more of the gaming promotion costs to local businesses. The suit asks that the Gaming Board be prohibited from enforcing the provisions pending the Court’s decision. Some would say the complaint looks meritless. A full copy of the complaint is here.

On Wednesday, a coalition of 17 downstate school districts filed a lawsuit against Governor Rauner and the Illinois State Board of Education arguing the State has failed to provide enough money to deliver a high-quality education. The suit further argues that Illinois’ reliance on local property taxes to pay schools creates a disparity in poorer communities where districts have less of a tax base to rely on making it harder for students to meet educational standards adopted by the State as class sizes increase and programs are cut. The coalition of school districts want the State to enact a different model to fund education for low-income districts, which would allow students to meet those standards.

Governor Rauner filed three new Executive Orders that he believes will improve and streamline Illinois state government. EO17-01 makes the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) a stand-alone agency. The remaining functions of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which previously included the ALPML, will now be merged into the Department of Natural Resources. EO17-02 merges the Human Rights Commission into the Department of Human Rights. The Governor argues this merger will produce faster action in both investigative and legal proceedings. EO17-03 transfers the functions of the Energy and Recycling Office from the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The order also transfers the Office of Coal Development to the Department of Natural Resources.

The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability issued its March monthly briefing. According to the report, overall base revenues grew $139 million in March, with over half of the gain coming from an increase in federal sources. The Commission cautions that the gain in federal sources was due to an extremely weak previous month, and the overall outlook for federal sources remains bleak. Through the first 3/4ths of the fiscal year, base receipts are off $1.315 billion or 5.9%, and the current trajectory is expected to continue through the remainder of the fiscal year. A full copy of the March monthly briefing can be accessed here.

**In other legislative news**

Legislation to increase the minimum wage to $15/hour (HB 0198 (HFA 0001) (Guzzardi)) passed the House Labor Committee 17-6. The increase would be phased in up to $15 by January 1, 2022. Floor Amendment 1 to HB 198 is pending on the House Floor.

A House Committee approved SB14 (Cullerton/Currie), which makes statutory changes necessary to stabilize the Chicago Municipal and Laborer’s Pension Fund. Absent legislative changes, both funds are projected to become insolvent near the year 2025. Changes made to the pension funds by the previous General Assembly were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Identical legislation was passed at the end of the 99th General Assembly and was vetoed by the Governor.

The Illinois Senate approved legislation (SB1722 (Raoul)) to create the Safe Neighborhoods Reform Act by a vote of 35-9-4. The legislation offers guidance for sentencing of repeat gun offenders, incorporates some of the recommendations from the Governor’s Criminal Justice Reform Commission, makes changes to penalty enhancements for drug crimes, and allows for sentencing credits for certain classes for drug offenses. The bill will now move to the House for consideration.

Legislation to provide property tax relief by creating and increasing various homestead exemptions (HB156 (Mussman)) passed the House by a vote of 108-1. Under the bill, all homeowners would be eligible for an annual $8,000 exemption on their primary residence. In addition, the current senior citizens homestead exemption for seniors over the age of 65 would increase from $5,000 to $6,000 annually. Veterans would be able to receive property tax relief, as returning service members certified 20-30 percent disabled who are currently ineligible for property tax relief would be provided a $2,500 annual exemption. All veterans over the age of 75 would also be able to receive a $2,500 exemption. The bill also creates a new property tax freeze for disabled homeowners receiving Supplemental Security Income from the federal government, and expands tax credits provided to long-term homeowners. HB 156 now moves to the Senate.

A measure to limit privatization and prevent further layoff of Department of Corrections’ nurses (SB19 (McCann/Costello)) passed the Illinois House by a vote of 68-42. The bill passed the Senate last week and has been sent to the Governor for his consideration.

Negotiations continue between healthcare provider organizations and Teladoc, a leading telehealth provider, on SB 1811 (Althoff). The Illinois State Medical Society and the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation believe the bill would place unnecessary regulations on telehealth in Illinois. Stakeholders reconvene later in the month to continue negotiations.

The House Appropriations Public Safety Committee will hold a subject matter hearing at noon on April 19th at noon in Room C-600 of the Biliandic Building in Chicago to discuss the tax and regulatory structure for cannabis in Illinois. The House Health & Healthcare Disparities Committee will hold a hearing at 2 p.m. the same day to discuss the state of Illinois’ Medical Cannabis Program.

**MEDICIAD MANAGED CARE HEARING**

The Senate Special Committee on Oversight of Medicaid Managed Care held a subject matter hearing this week to receive an “update on Medicaid managed care.” HFS Director Norwood and several healthcare organizations and providers delivered testimony.

Director Norwood’s testimony was similar to that which she provided in a managed care House hearing last week, discussing the importance of managed care, the recent issuance of an RFP to expand capitated managed care statewide (which will streamline administrative procedures and move to a standardized drug formulary), and the transformation that will take place with behavioral health services around community homes.

Providers remain skeptical that such a transformation should take place when the current operational systems with managed care in a limited number of counties remains broken, including the recent reversion to fee-for-service in 6 counties in central Illinois due to lack of network adequacy.

Committee members asked questions about the lack of ACEs and CCEs in the current market and their lack of inclusion in the recent RFP. The Director remains confident that MCOs will be able to cover all regions of the State and offer choice, as a bidders’ conference this week had 79 attendees.

A panel designed to discuss the cost differences between managed care and fee-for-service provided testimony, noting that providers have a greater incentive to manage risk. A representative from SSM Health, a not-for-profit, Catholic healthcare system, stated that providers have historically coordinated care to keep costs down, particularly in a state like Illinois that has such low Medicaid reimbursement rates. Under the current system with managed care organizations, denials are pushing providers’ reimbursement rates lower than fee-for-service, while at the same time MCOs are not coordinating care.

A representative of the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations then discussed the progress that has been made with providers on issues such as credentialing, billing guidelines, and regular communications. These organizations believe they are working to improve provider relations and are moving in the right direction. The MCO representative then described some ways to strengthen Illinois’ managed care program, such as creating health literacy programs and provider education. The MCOs are opposed to a single drug formulary, which would limit an MCOs ability to negotiate.

The Illinois Hospital Association provided testimony that highlighted problems with processing claims, lack of incentives for MCOs to provide on-time payments and provide care coordination, and credentialing. Hospitals would like to see a claims audit of MCOs, standardized billing protocols, greater flexibility with credentialing, and, at a minimum, to be paid at the fee-for-service rate.

While hospitals have been focusing on trying to make the current managed care system work, it was noted that costs have increased due to pre-certification requirements and resolving the non-payment issues, in addition to other costs such as the increased need to supplement MCO care coordination. Providers also expressed concern that current MCOs who are not awarded a contract for 2018 will have less incentive to resolve outstanding claims issues. Nursing home provider representatives expressed concern with outstanding claims that are several years old and want to see administrative processes streamlined and simplified. Providers also felt the transition statewide would move too quickly for small downstate providers to adjust.

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**\*\*9** Shared by Steve Heltsley,

**Direct TV talking menus and descriptive video**

If you have Direct TV and wish you could access the menus, try these easy steps to here -channel, programs, and program times.

If this doesn't work, call Direct TV at 1-800-531-5000 to inquire about getting a new talking menu satellite receiver. If your TV provider doesn't have a talking menu box and you decide to switch to Direct TV tell them I referred you and give this number 618-401-4008 and get $10 off your bill for ten months.

To turn on the talking feature first turn on your TV and receiver. Secondly you need to know where the following buttons are located on your Direct TV remote: info button, arrow right, arrow down, and the select button. The select button is in the center of the navigational arrow buttons and the info button is the fourth button down on the right side of the remote and is the button directly under the right arrow. Now you are ready to enable the talking feature.

Press the info button.

Press the right arrow one time for closed captioning.

Press the down arrow three times for the talking guide.

Press the select button.

If your box is compatible, you can now navigate the menus, change channels, and hear the prompts to better utilize your television experience.

To disable this feature, repeat the procedure to toggle it off.

Want to watch programs broadcasted with description? Tune into a program with description and follow these steps:

Press the info button.

Press the right arrow four times.

Press the down arrow two times to SAP digital.

Press the select button.

If the program is broadcasting description you should hear it. Sometimes Spanish is broadcasted on the SAP signal. If you wish to turn the SAP off then follow the procedure again to toggle it off.

You have to turn the SAP on for each channel you want description on.

A quick way to turn off the SAP is to channel up or down as changing channels turns off the description or SAP setting. Then follo the simple steps to turn the description (SAP) setting on.

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**\*\*10** From the **Illinois Beverage Association**

Hello All - I wanted to thank you for your support of the beverage industry over the years, we are **not giving up our fight to repeal the Cook County beverage tax**.

Because we have seen the disastrous effects of a beverage tax in Philadelphia, we simply cannot allow for Cook County to experience the same negative effects of a beverage tax. As a result of Philadelphia’s tax, sales have fallen in the city by as much as 50%. Retailers, restaurants, bottlers and distributors have all announced hundreds in layoffs and many more employees have had their hours reduced. Just last week Pepsi Co. took the unprecedented step of completely ending the sale of 12-packs and 2-liter bottles in Philadelphia.

We will be formally relaunching the No Cook County Beverage Tax Coalition this month to repeal the beverage tax. The campaign will be reissuing public materials.

Best,

Claudia Rodriguez

Acting Executive Director | Illinois Beverage Association

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**\*\*11** Shared by Vending Times

Issue Date: Vol. 57, No. 4, April 2017, Posted On: 4/3/2017

**Researchers Claim That Time Delays In Vending Machines Prompt Healthier Snack Choices**

SAN DIEGO -- Delaying access to high-calorie foods and snacks in vending machines can shift people's choices to purchase healthier snack options, according to new research. Preventive medicine experts at Rush University Medical Center presented the findings on March 31 at the Society of Behavioral Medicine 's annual meeting in San Diego. The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health.

"Having to wait for something makes it less desirable," said Brad Appelhans, clinical psychologist at the Rush University Prevention Center, and the study's lead investigator of the study. "Research shows that humans strongly prefer immediate gratification, and this preference influences choices and behavior in daily life."

Appelhans and other researchers developed a new technology called DISC (Delays to Improve Snack Choices) that employs a "delay bar" to separate "healthier" snacks from the less nutritious options. When a patron selects a less nutritious snack, the system begins a 25-second time delay before the machine releases it from the vending machine.

The DISC-equipped vending machine also has an LED screen, which displays the delay times for "less healthy" snack items, and a delivery countdown, which allows the customer to change his or her snack choice to a healthier option.

The delay reportedly yielded a 2% to 5% increase in the proportion of total purchases from healthy snacks. "Also, we found that the delay did not harm total sales volume or vending revenue, which is important to vending machine operators," said Appelhans.

Full Story here: <http://www.vendingtimes.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=737C17AB0E09499F90660557C93983AD&nm=Articles&type=Publishing&mod=Publications::Article&mid=8F3A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=E1FCEFC09045456181B369C0BC6F7562>

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**\*\*12** **Broker News Burdette Beckman, Ray Salvador**

Snyder’s-Lance is excited to introduce a new Jay’s Large Single Serve Potato Chip Line. This line will replace the current SS 1 oz. line of Jay’s Potato Chips. The LSS line will duplicate the flavors currently being offered in the 1 oz. pack – Original, Pit BBQ and Hotstuff. The new LSS Jay’s line will be ready for first shipment May 6, 2017. The SS 1 oz. line will be discontinued at that time.

#110892 56/1.25 oz. Jays Pit BBQ Ridges Potato Chips

#110893 56/1.25 oz. Jays Hotstuff Potato Chips

#110894 56/1.25 oz. Jays Original Potato Chips

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**\*\*13 Broker News Patterson, Inc**, Cathy Aldridge

**Little Debbie Marshmallow Treat -** There is a $.04 USG Elite rebate combined with a $.03 new item rebate + and additional $.05 introductory offer. Patterson will be writing the check on the $.08 while I believe USG will manage their own rebate. Bottom line is the Marshmallow Treat will be $.12 cents less than the book price.

If you are interested in the Patterson portion of this extra direct rebate please call Cathy Aldridge at 847-744-0399 to pre-book your orders of the Little Debbie Marshmallow Treat.

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**\*\*14 Broker News Saverino & Associates,** Mark Saverino

Look for many of the **Vitner’s** line up to have a $1.08 Off Invoice in the 2nd quarter.

The rebateable USG coffee cup is now from **Popz/International Cup**. Look for great deals on these cups that will also provide a USG rebate.

Look for **Chattanooga Bakery** Moon Pies in the 2nd quarter, many items will have an office invoice promotion.

**Biscomerica** pre-book. You must call Mark Saverino 630-868-2629 to place your order and receive your extra direct rebate on these items. For deliveries between 4/3 and 6/30. Minimum rebate payable $10.00

#59961 Sweet Serenity Chocolate Chip 60/2oz $1.20 rebate

#54809 Sweet Serenity Chocolate Chip 48/3oz $0.96 rebate

#59861 Sun-Maid Oatmeal Rasin Apple 60.2oz $1.20 rebate

#59862 Sun-Maid Bluberry Greek Yogurt Chip 60.1.75oz $1.20 rebate

#64741 Columbus Cappuccino 60/2oz #1.20 rebate

#54806 Basil’s Cappuccino 48/3oz $0.96 rebate

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**\*\*15** From Claudia Lannan, RSA Management Group

Hi Everyone, please click on the link to below for **Ping's new social media commercial featuring my brother, Mario Tobia**. The commercial debuted on Friday. Mario is a 4 time American Blind Golf and a 2 time US Blind Golf Champion. He is currently ranked 4th in the world.

<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/7ijmY>

Also, below is a link to a Comcast commercial from a few years ago that aired in the Philadelphia area.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tby81t4sL7E>

If anyone is interested in getting involved in either of the national blind golf organizations or your regional organization, let me know and I will connect you with Mario.

Sincerely,

Claudia Lannan

Administrative Director

RSA Management Group

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**\*\*16** From **RSA Management Group**

**Frito Lay**

In order to qualify for any 2nd quarter Frito rebate, you must take delivery of at least one case of either item listed below before June 30, 2017.

FRITO LAY 2nd QUARTER 2017 NEWS ITEMS

In April, Frito is offering a .04 cents per unit off invoice discount on Lay’s Wavy Hickory BBQ. In May and June, there will be a $1.92 per case rebate on Kettle Chips 40% Less Fat Jalapeno Cheddar.

1.50 oz Lays Wavy Hickory BBQ Flavored Chips - 64 count – UPC 66457

1.375 oz Lay’s Kettle Chips 40% Less Fat Jalapeno Cheddar -64 count – UPC 25111

To ensure delivery of the correct product, order by the UPC code. Please let me know if you have trouble getting either item, or if you have any questions.

**RSA 2Q 2017 Pepsi Innovation Products Participating Bottlers ONLY**

For an extra 10 cents off per case rebate on ALL your 2nd quarter Pepsi purchases, you must buy at least 5 (1) cases of any of Innovation products listed below. These are all new items and should now be available at all participating distributors.

Additionally, Pepsi is offering $1.00 per case rebate in May on all Innovation products.

**PEPSI 2nd QUARTER 2017 INNOVATION ITEMS**

Starbucks 13.7 oz. Frappuccino Dulce de Leche

Mountain Dew 16oz. Green and White Label

Mountain Dew 16 oz. Spike Lemonade and Raspberry Lemonade

Lipton 14.5 oz. Tea House in Glass Bottles – 4 Flavors

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