



January 14, 2026

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman, US Senate Committee on Armed
Services
425 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman, US House Committee on Armed
Services
2469 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, US Senate Committee on
Armed Services
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member, US House Committee on
Armed Services
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Wicker and Rogers, and Ranking Members Reed and Smith:

The National Federation of the Blind is the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Americans. As the President of the National Federation of the Blind, I serve our tens of thousands of members from all fifty states, including numerous blind entrepreneurs and Randolph-Sheppard business owners. Today, I am writing to bring to the attention of the Armed Service Committees an important matter that will devastate business opportunities for blind entrepreneurs who participate in the Randolph-Sheppard Program. The Randolph-Sheppard Act, originally signed into law nearly one hundred years ago, affords a priority for blind business owners to operate food services on federal properties, including military bases. Lately, this priority has come under significant attack. If nothing is done, thirty-seven blind business owners will soon lose their statutory priority to operate on Army bases and will likely lose their contracts, finding themselves unemployed, and twice that number of other blind entrepreneurs could potentially be in jeopardy. In addition to the blind business owners directly affected, the loss of income from these contracts will severely affect state licensing agencies, which operate the blind vending program at the state level and thus will indirectly harm hundreds of other blind entrepreneurs across the country.

By way of background, the Randolph-Sheppard program is administered by the Department of Education. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon recently granted a blanket waiver to the Department of the Army at the request of Secretary of the Army, Daniel Driscoll, which exempts all Army dining facilities from the Randolph-Sheppard Act. The official notification of the waiver was published in the Federal Register on December 23, 2025. The impetus for this waiver request comes from Secretary Driscoll's misunderstanding of the program. This misunderstanding is evident based on numerous inaccurate comments and false claims regarding the Randolph-Sheppard Program in the media, including the *Ruthless Podcast*. Additionally, a blanket waiver such as this violates the law and will likely be overturned by the courts if challenged, given that the waiver is based on misinformation and misunderstandings that can easily be rebutted.

When we learned of Secretary Driscoll's efforts and inaccurate statements about the program, I and Nicky Gacos, President of our National Association of Blind Merchants Division, reached out to the secretary in an effort to establish dialogue. To date, Secretary Driscoll has not acknowledged our request. To that end we are urging you, as the chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, to demand that the Department of the Army adhere to the requirements of the Randolph-Sheppard Act and that the Department of the Army withdraw this request for a waiver immediately. The Randolph-Sheppard vendors who operate on military bases all across the country have earned numerous awards for quality and are fully committed to our military. We welcome the opportunity to address any concerns that Secretary Driscoll has.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we are available to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Riccobono, President
National Federation of the Blind

cc: The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chairman, US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member, US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, US House Committee on Education and the Workforce

The Honorable Robert Scott, Ranking Member, US House Committee on Education and the Workforce