**Legislative Agenda of Blind Americans**

**Priorities for the 114th Congress, FIRST Session**

**The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind people. We represent the collective views of the 1.3 million blind people throughout the US. All of our leaders and the vast majority of our members are blind, but anyone can participate in our movement.**

**The NFB’s three legislative initiatives for 2015 are:**

* **The Transitioning to Meaningful and Integrated Employment Act (HR 188)**

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act allows employers to pay workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage because of the false assumption that they are less productive than nondisabled workers. This antiquated provision breeds low expectations and discourages disabled Americans from reaching their full potential. HR 188 responsibly phases out the use of the 14(c) Special Wage Certificates, ending the era of segregated, subminimum wage work.

* **The Technology, Education and Accessibility in College and Higher Education Act**

Electronic instructional materials have replaced traditional methods of learning in postsecondary education, but the overwhelming majority of ebooks, courseware, web content, and other technology is inaccessible to students with print disabilities. The law requires equal access in the classroom but fails to provide direction to schools for how that applies to technology. The TEACH Act creates voluntary accessibility guidelines for educational technology to improve blind students’ access to course material, stimulate the market, and reduce litigation for schools.

* **The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled**

Despite the ability to convert print books into accessible formats like Braille, large print, audio, and digital copies, over 300 million blind and otherwise print-disabled people are excluded from accessing 95 percent of published works. The Marrakesh Treaty calls for contracting parties to add exemptions and limitations to domestic copyright laws to permit reproduction, distribution, and cross-border exchange of accessible works. Blind Americans, rights holders, educators, and other stakeholders will benefit from this treaty, and Congress should ratify it promptly.

**The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back. These priorities will remove barriers that stand between people and our dreams, which often include meaningful employment, equality in the classroom, and access to published works. We urge Congress to remove these barriers by supporting our legislative initiatives.**