

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By: Dan Sippl, RSVA President

Dividends From Your RSVA

As you are aware, it has been a very busy winter for all of us at RSVA. All of the hard work of you, our members, and your Board of Directors has paid the highest dividend possible to vendors across the country.

Our Convention Committee planned and executed another fantastic Sagebrush Training Conference in Las Vegas in February. The high attendance was truly a benefit to our success at putting to rest HR-7, the House Bill that threatened our program. Thanks to your Convention and Legislative Committees, the American Council of the Blind (ACB), and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) for getting the word to all participants.

We were privileged to have Melanie Brunson and Catriona MacDonald present as the House debated HR-7. Their presence allowed all those in attendance to have the latest information on a minute-to-minute basis so we could make informed calls to our respective Congressmen to save our Program for us and future generations. The high quality of speakers on a variety of subjects clearly exemplified the work of our Sagebrush Conference Committee. The successful conference was followed with the actions in Washington, D.C. by RSVA and ACB members.

Then, we had the Portman Amendment in the Senate. This was soundly defeated 86 to 12, and was only accomplished by you and your friends and colleagues that belong to RSVA, ACB and many other blindness organizations, along with many private industry Trade Associations. Please keep in mind that this can only happen by your continued membership and support in RSVA and other Blindness Organizations that “network” together on a daily basis to allow everyone to pool their resources during a full frontal attack on your livelihood.

Finally, but surely not the least, is the Presidential Memorandum to all Federal Agencies directing them to honor the priority of the Randolph-Sheppard Act. We all owe many a big thank you for making this happen; especially, Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Disabilities, Lynnae Ruttledge, RSA Commissioner and her top staff for personally meeting at the White House with Melanie Brunson, Executive Director of ACB, Eric Bridges, Legislative consultant for ACB, Bob Humphreys, RSVA Legal Counsel and former RSA Commissioner and myself. Now it is up to all of us to be a constant reminder to all agency heads and property managers of President Obama's intention to have our program continue to be a major source of employment for all blind and visually impaired

As you can readily see, your commitment and membership to RSVA and other related organizations pays the highest dividends when it matters. Therefore, I cannot say too many times, to get involved and stay involved. Your involvement makes it worth all of the efforts put forward by the countless volunteer hours given by your colleagues on a daily basis networking with RSVA, ACB and countless other blindness organizations, together with the private sector.

After such a busy winter, we want to keep the momentum going. We are now preparing for our Annual conference in Louisville, KY, this July. See the details later in this publication.

Work is well under way to having another successful Sagebrush again in Las Vegas the week of February 18th in 2013. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you in July in Louisville and again in February in Las Vegas where we can continue to build our network to make our program better and stronger for us and many generations to come.

P.S.: Meeting and making new friends at the Annual Convention and Sagebrush Conference is just another "icing" on all of the dividends that being a member and involved with RSVA can pay.