



## **Kansas Association for the Blind And Visually Impaired**

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TO: House Appropriations Committee  
FROM: Judith Davis, Legislative Chair, KABVI  
DATE: January 26, 2012  
SUBJECT: HB 2442 Issues

First of all, I want to introduce myself. This is my first time before a Legislative Committee representing the Kansas Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (KABVI). I am Judy Davis, and I have worked as a specialist in services for people who are blind throughout all of my adult life. I recently retired from full time work in blindness services, while our former Legislative Chair, Michael Byington, has returned to work providing direct services for people who are blind and visually impaired. I am pleased to work with KABVI President, Ann Byington, to continue to represent blind and visually impaired consumers before the Kansas Legislature.

In the past, blind persons have benefitted from previous versions of this legislation, which bore the short name of State Use Law. Under its provisions, blind and visually impaired persons, and other persons with disabilities, worked in designated facilities to produce a variety of products which were sold to state institutions, thus meeting the needs of state government while employing blind and visually impaired Kansans. The requirements for these

facilities were that 75% of the direct labor force must be blind, visually impaired, or otherwise severely disabled. While many of these facilities started out as exploitative sweat shops that segregated and sequestered blind and disabled individuals, over the years, requirements for employment at the federal minimum wage or above, benefits, sick pay, vacation, etc., were added. Ultimately, this system began to make inroads on the extremely high percentages of unemployment among blind, severely visually impaired, and otherwise disabled Kansans.

Programs targeted to move blind and severely visually impaired people into jobs, are the time tested methodologies that have worked and that have statistically actually made a difference in the profoundly high unemployment rates among citizens who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Sadly, such programs are exactly the types that SRS has almost totally cut from its repertory. These are the types of programs that will need to be restored, either as functions of State government, or State supported efforts of the private sector, before significant progress will be made in reducing the nearly 70% unemployment level among blind and severely visually impaired Kansans.

Unfortunately, though this legislation is a beginning, KABVI members doubt that any of our population will receive much benefit from it. Our membership feels that the types of work offered will not be readily accomplished by most blind and/or visually impaired Kansans.