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December 3, 2013

Lee County Legislative Delegation:

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some State-wide issues impacting agencies that provide vision rehabilitation to residents of Florida whose sight cannot be improved by medical services.

Along with being the Executive Director of The Lighthouse of SWFL, Inc., I also serve as the Vice President of the Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind (FAASB). FAASB engages in efforts to improve support to seventeen vision rehabilitation agencies around the State in funding, legislative activities, and enabling top-quality services to be provided to residents of Florida who live with major vision loss and total blindness.

For this upcoming Legislative Session, FAASB will be advocating for strengthening of the White Cane Law 316.1301 in several areas:

- 1) The penalty for injury of a blind pedestrian, who is following the law, needs to be more than a misdemeanor. Currently, even with major injury or death, the driver is charged with only reckless driving. The penalty for having uncaged animals in a pick-up truck is stronger than when a human is hurt by a careless driver not paying attention.
- 2) That every driver's test includes a question or two about the White Cane Law. Currently, the questions are randomly chosen per test. Many who take the test never become aware that there is a White Cane Law.
- 3) Encourage law enforcement to record, on accident reports, if a person with a disability is injured in a vehicle accident so that statistics can be used to decrease legal and medical costs associated with such accidents. Also, that better training about the White Cane Law be provided to all law enforcement officers.



FAASB, in partnership with several advocacy groups, will focus on enhancing **SB 102/Drivers Leaving the Scene of a Crash/Sen. Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R, Miami):** <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2014/0102> & **HB 183/Drivers Leaving the Scene of a Crash/Rep. Bryan Nelson (R, Apopka):** <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=51303> to accomplish these changes.

FAASB also will encourage **License Plate Fee Reductions** as proposed in **SB 156/Motor Vehicle License Taxes/Senator Negrón (R, Palm City):** <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2014/0156> & **HB 61/Motor Vehicle License Taxes/Rep. Mike Hill (R, Pensacola):** <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=51177>. The reduction in fees will enable vehicle owners to potentially donate to the numerous causes that receive funding from the specialty license plates.

On a final note, I would encourage each of you to join the Florida Legislative Vision Caucus. It is the largest caucus of its kind in the nation.

Sincerely,



Douglas Fowler, Executive Director  
Vice-President, (FAASB) Florida Association of Agencies  
Serving the Blind