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PRESS RELEASE

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President Obama Mentions Hoover Dam as Example of Opportunity For Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

On January 20, 2012, President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum directing federal department heads to renew their commitment to the Randolph-Sheppard Act (20 U.S.C. 107 et seq.), which created the vending facility program requiring qualified blind individuals be given priority of right to operate vending facilities on federal properties, said Frank R. Woodbeck, the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR).

This nationwide program is responsible for providing entrepreneurial opportunities for over 2,500 individuals who are blind. In Nevada, DETR manages the Randolph-Sheppard vendor program at federal facilities as well as the Business Enterprises of Nevada (BEN) Program.

“BEN promotes the development of successful independent business men and women to operate various vending operations on state, county, city and municipal properties,” Woodbeck said. “BEN is a true enterprise program which is totally self-funded and receives no state or federal money. The BEN program continues to move forward providing opportunity for self-employment to individuals who are blind but possess an entrepreneurial spirit.”

BEN has been operating at the Hoover Dam since 1975. As President Obama noted in his Memorandum, today there are three BEN stores that serve visitors who travel to this historic international destination.

BEN also manages a full service galley at the Fallon Naval Air Station and recently received a five star award from the Navy for its outstanding food service operation. Currently, 17 blind/visually impaired entrepreneurs operate vending locations throughout the state that generated over \$9 million in economic activity last year.

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DETR is comprised of the Employment Security Division, Equal Rights Commission, Rehabilitation Division, the Information Development and Processing Division and the Research and Analysis Bureau. DETR works in partnership with the Nevada JobConnect System to provide training and job placement services to job seekers and to assist employers in hiring practices.