

Report



State Commission For The Blind

Vol. II, No. 1

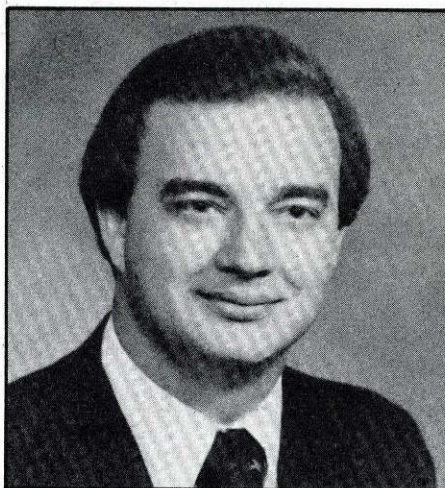
April 1985

REAUTHORIZATION BILLS FILED IN LEGISLATURE ...

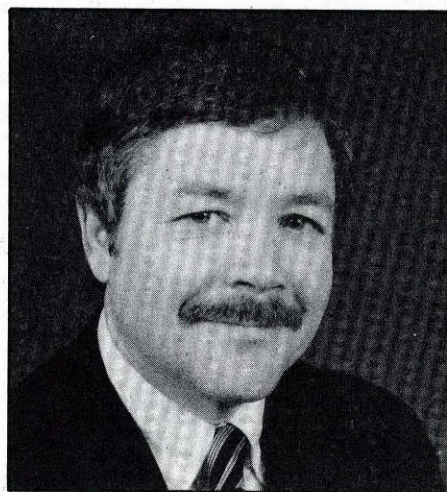
State Senator John Sharp of Victoria and Representative Gary Thompson of Abilene have introduced legislation relating to the continuation of the State Commission for the Blind as the single state authority responsible for the delivery of rehabilitation services to blind and visually disabled Texans. The two measures also call for changing the agency's name to the Texas Commission for the Blind.

S.B. 195 has been reviewed by the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee which includes Senator Sharp as one of its members. A committee substitute to the measure was passed by the Senate on February 6. It has been referred to the House Committee on Government Organization for review before it goes to the full House for a vote. H.B. 331 was introduced by Representative Thompson on January 15 and referred to the Committee on Government Organization on January 29 where it awaits review by Committee members.

"Our reauthorization bill reflects many of the recommendations made by the Sunset Advisory Commission," notes John C. Wilson, executive director, "and we are confident that the 69th session of the Texas Legislature will provide the Commission with a stronger, more effective legislative framework."



Senator John Sharp



Representative Gary Thompson

SESSION HITS HALF WAY POINT

Lawmakers now find themselves more than halfway through the regular session of the 69th Texas Legislature. The 140-day legislative

pilgrimage which is slated to end on May 28 still poses several intriguing junctures for state legislators. The 69th Legislature has been characterized as one of the most "serious" summits in recent history. The \$733 million revenue gap has everyone looking to trim expenditures wherever possible. Money, or the lack of it; however, is not the only item on this legislative agenda. Several bills, including those outlined below are of particular interest to disabled Texans:

S.B. 390 by Sarpalius, relating to the provision of refueling services to disabled persons and to the price charged for motor vehicle fuel provided to those persons.

H.B. 387 by Price, relating to the placement of reading devices for blind and visually impaired persons in public libraries in certain cities and in the libraries of state institutions of higher education.

S.B. 36 by Jones, relating to a presumption concerning prosecution of an offense of the law regarding parking places for disabled persons.

H.B. 2086 by Harris, relating to disabled persons with support dogs, wheelchairs, crutches or other devices of assistance and mobility to be able to access all public transportation.

Any of our readers who are interested in the progress of these or any other bills can call 1-800-252-9693 for the latest status on each measure.

From the Director



State Commission For The Blind
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WILLIAM C. CONNER, Chairman

JOHN C. WILSON, Executive Director

Over the past three months the State Commission for the Blind has been actively involved in advocating for the needs of blind and visually disabled Texans to legislative committees. Along with Chairman W.C. Conner and other members of our governing board, I have provided testimony on behalf of the Commission's budget request for fiscal years 1986 and 1987. The House Budget Oversight Subcommittee, the Human Services Committee, and the House Appropriations Committee have all held hearings on the agency's budget request. The strong response from consumers across the state is indicative of their concern for adequate state funds to serve blind and visually impaired citizens.

In meetings with lawmakers, I have tried to convey that the Commission has increased its effectiveness over the last five years while greatly reducing personnel, and allocated the resultant savings in personnel and administrative costs into direct client services. We have also conveyed that the agency is already under budget constraints and is having to focus services on individuals who are severely disabled (which is mandated by the federal Rehabilitation Act) while denying services to less severely disabled Texans who are also eligible for services.

The Commission acknowledges the economic problems in Texas and recognizes that public resources will have to be carefully allocated. We believe, however, that the budget recommendations of the Governor which call for minimal cuts in state revenue for the Commission are more reasonable and equitable than the severe cuts recommended by the Legislative Budget Board. As a result of zero funding in both the House and Senate programs operated cooperatively between the agency and various lighthouses in Texas received federal, state, and private resources to serve this large, neglected population.

With about two months remaining in this legislative session, we are hopeful that the decision makers will find the revenue to at least bring the agency up to current level state support for our programs, but on this date the prospects are looking uncertain.

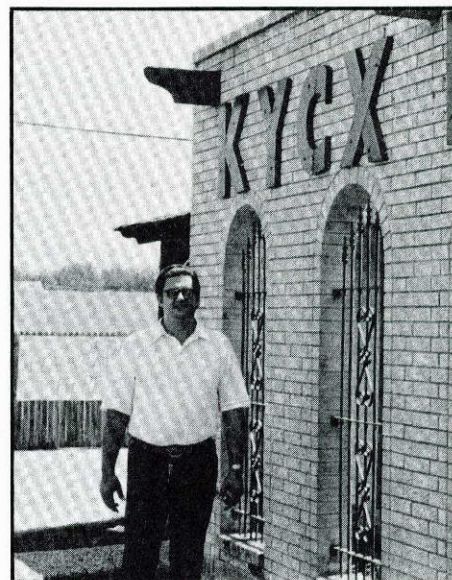
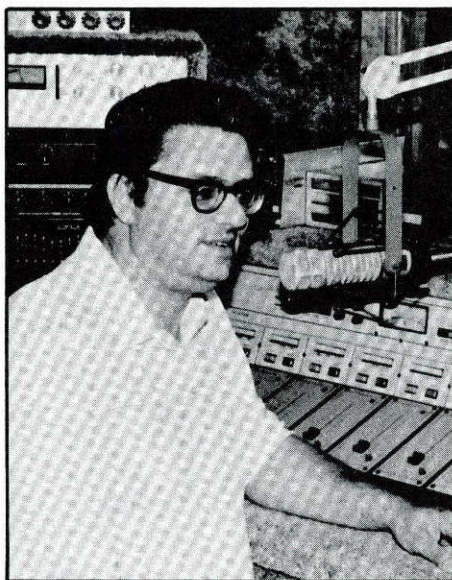
John C. Wilson
 Executive Director

A VISIT WITH BILL BOOTH

One of the benefits of putting together stories about agency clients and the types of jobs in which they are involved is the opportunity to travel to different areas of state and meet people who possess unique skills and characters. Not too long ago I accompanied Commission VR counselor Budge Kimbell to Mexia for an interview with a gentleman who had started an FM radio station in that city and was supposedly doing "wonders" with this venture. Having a life long interest in the field of broadcast journalism I accepted this invitation readily. Besides, I was very curious to find out where and what Mexia, Texas, exactly was.

It didn't take long to realize that the person I had heard so much about during my drive up to Mexia with Budge was truly a person with an individual presence that cannot be easily categorized. At first meeting Bill Booth I was immediately struck by an imposing, yet warm person whose job as radio station manager is but one small index of his varied skills and total range. It is in his unpretentious approach to life and his profession that one is most especially impressed. After a brief commentary on his personal background as a disc jockey and his many experiences in this field, Bill Booth is ready to talk about his true pride and joy: KYCX-FM.

For several years Booth studied the feasibility of an FM station in Mexia, knowing full well that his was an idea whose time had come. Along with the help of a few wealthy local citizens who were so sold on Booth's dream that they poured in more than \$300,000 into what is truly the state of the art in equipment for the new station. Armed with the necessary support and the public reaction necessary to obtain licensure, Booth was successful in creating a radio station with limitless potential. KYCX-FM has been on the air for more than two years now, sending its



Bill Booth (above) describes some of the state of the art equipment found in one of the recording studios and later poses for a picture in front of his station, KYCX-FM.

progressive country/western sounds over a 40-mile radius.

Still another testament to Booth's skills has been his ability to surround himself with a high caliber staff which takes a no-nonsense approach to the radio industry and recognizes the value of a sophisticated station that offers listeners not only an alternative to the traditional "small town" radio sound, but also a viable alternative to a station of any size and market. You see, KYCX-FM is deeply attuned to civic needs and is constantly searching for the exact reading of the community's pulse.

Poised with more than 13 years of experience in the radio industry, Bill Booth has approached his position as president and station manager in a truly envious manner, noting that "We don't consider ourselves solely a Mexia station but rather a medium for the entire area to use." As he recounts the types of news stories his staff has covered and his own involvement in public affairs programming that takes on the "most controversial of issues," Booth takes a definite pleasure in pointing out that KYCX-FM belongs to the community and there is no longer any need for folks to "tune into Dallas or Waco stations for entertainment or news."

In addition to his round-the-

clock involvement with his station, Booth remains active in community affairs, including several projects with the local Lion's Club. His ascension as a local celebrity is no coincidence. He recognizes the need to maintain a close contact with the public perhaps better than any Madison Avenue public relations campaign. As a professional who prides himself on preparation and accuracy, Bill Booth has been able to transpose his energy and his drive to anyone with whom he has contact. The fact that Booth is legally blind only means that he has a minor "hindrance."

"Someone with a visual impairment can do this type of work. It would be merely more difficult, but not impossible," he says as he assesses his own accomplishments and his approach to life. In a relatively short period of time Bill Booth has been able to orchestrate a successful accomplishment. According to Booth, he has taken a "big city sound and added good personnel along with a local slant and the end result has been a professional radio station with a hometown ingredient." In too short a time my visit with Bill Booth is over and as I exit his domain I realize that something truly memorable has been introduced in the small community of Mexia.

MAPS PAVES THE WAY

One of the State Commission for the Blind's most significant expenditure made on behalf of a client is the purchase of physical restoration or medical services. During fiscal year 1984, for example, approximately 64% of case service costs (money spent directly on behalf of individual clients) fell into this category of "restoration services." These services consist of surgery and medical treatment, hospitalization, anesthesia, and related procedures designed to correct or improve a patient's physical condition. In the case of agency clients, eye surgery is sometimes a prerequisite before a client can enter into a training program, participate in school, or maintain productive employment.

Additionally, the Commission purchases a significant number of ophthalmological and optometric evaluations and general physical examinations as part of an applicant's initial evaluation process. The information provided by the medical community is important as part of the eligibility process and as part of the rehabilitation process.

A constant challenge faced by the Commission, particularly during times of limited financial resources, is how to obtain needed medical services for eligible clients at a reasonable cost. The Commission's funds are used only as a "last resource" for eligible clients who have a severe visual disability, who meet an economic needs test, and for whom no other resources (similar benefits) are available. In order to curtail medical costs and to provide a standardized means of paying for medical services, the agency uses a Maximum Affordable Payment Schedule, or MAPS, which lists various medical procedures and the amounts the agency can afford to pay for those procedures.

The MAPS, which was developed in cooperation with the Texas Rehabilitation Commission in the early 1970s, uses a five-digit coding system based on a publication enti-

tled the "Current Procedural Terminology," 4th edition, published by the American Medical Association. "Our MAPS is similar to the CPT manual," explains Scott Bowman, director of Staff Development, "except that we added a 'fee in dollars' column showing payment amounts." Thus, an ophthalmologist in the Rio Grande Valley is reimbursed the same amount for a cataract surgery as is an ophthalmologist in Houston, for example.

Considering the fact that some of the payment amounts in the MAPS, particularly in the Eye Section, are quite low compared to private patient fees, the Commission has enjoyed excellent cooperation overall from physicians, optometrists, and other medical providers. Medical vendors who accept Commission payments agree to accept such payments as "payment in full" for a given procedure. In other words, doctors may choose to write-off a loss between their standard fees and the agency's allowable payments. "There's no question that many of the members of the medical community who participate with the Commission on our MAPS program are making a genuine contribution to our work," notes executive director John C. Wilson.

The Commission maintains contractual agreements with each of the hospitals in Texas which provide services to agency clients. Payments to hospitals are based on a percentage of the total bill. Except for a few specific limitations in the MAPS, hospital fees are not otherwise subject to MAPS codings. Clients who can afford to do so are asked to help pay for their medical rehabilitation costs at the onset. Doctors and hospitals with which the agency works agree not to bill clients after the service for any remaining portion. All other medical practitioners are subject to the payment ceilings in the Maps so that the greatest number of clients may be served at the lowest possible expense to taxpayers. "The philosophy behind the development of the MAPS was that the provision of

"There's no question that many of the members of the medical community who participate with the Commission on our MAPS program are making a genuine contribution to our work."

medical care to agency clients should be a cooperative effort between the medical and rehabilitation communities. Over the years we have witnessed a continued commitment from medical practitioners to the role of the agency and the value of the services offered to blind and visually disabled Texans," Wilson points out.

HEARING HELD ON NEEDS OF OLDER BLIND PERSONS

The United States House of Representatives' Select Committee on Aging held an oversight hearing in Alexandria, Virginia on April 26 for the purpose of hearing testimony on the needs of the older blind persons. As president of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, John C. Wilson, attended the oversight hearing, as well as other administrators from across the country.

"This segment of the population in Texas, as well as other states, is virtually without services because neither state nor federal funds have been appropriated for this purpose," says Wilson. He adds that the testimony presented at the hearing will perhaps have a favorable impact on the appropriation decisions presently before Congress.

**Toll Free
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1-800-252-5204**

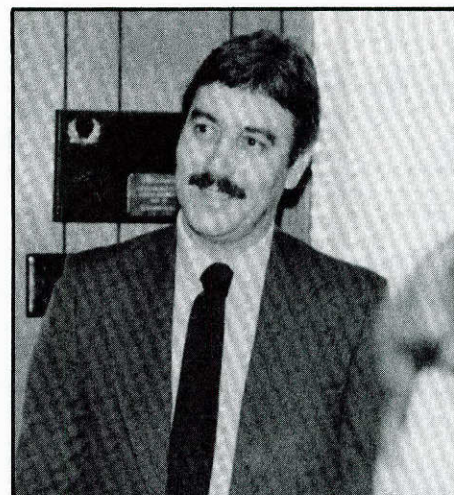
IN BRIEF

- ... "Disabled Hispanic Texans: Rehabilitation and Employment" was the theme for a conference held March 20-21 in San Antonio. Several Commission representatives participated in the program and offered input on service delivery approaches to working with blind and visually impaired Hispanics.
- ... On May 21 a conference on "Disabled Black Texans: Exploring Special Concerns" will be held in Austin. As with the Hispanic session, this conference is cosponsored by the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons and includes participation from Commission representatives.
- ... The 1985 Texas Alliance Annual meeting is slated for April 28-30 in Dallas. The theme for this year's conference will be "Attitudes Toward Blindness: Adjusting to the Crisis, the Family, the Professional, the Employer, and the Medical Community."
- ... Disability Rally Day was observed March 25-26 in Austin. Disabled people and groups from throughout the state gathered at the State Capitol for a yearly event that draws attention to the role of disabled Texans. Director John C. Wilson joined other agency heads on a panel discussion that centered on legislative priority issues for disabled persons.
- ... The State Commission for the Blind's administrative office building is currently under construction. It will be located adjacent to the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center in Austin. Occupancy is expected for sometime in mid-1986. **The Commission welcomes any suggestions from our readers regarding a possible name for this new building. Address your written comments to the Public Information Office.**

- ... Three branches of the United States military have been given approval to contract with McDonald's and Burger King for fast food service. A U.S. District Court judge has ruled against a coalition of organizations representing blind individuals which had sued to prevent the contracts from being implemented. The plaintiffs have argued that the Navy's contract with McDonald's and the Army and Air Force agreement with Burger King restricted the bidding to only a limited group. Judge Barrington D. Parker ruled that the contracts do not violate the Randolph-Sheppard Act, which requires federal property managers to solicit bids for cafeterias from the state rehabilitation agencies which provide training and issue licenses to blind persons under the program.
- ... The United States Claims Court has ruled in favor of the state in a lawsuit to collect more than \$10 million on behalf of the Texas Commission for the Blind. Under the Randolph-Sheppard Act, a portion of income from vending machines located on federal property must be paid to blind vendors or to the agency administering this program in a state. The Defense Department has contended that military bases are exempt from the law and appealed a three-member arbitration panel's decision to the federal court. It is anticipated that the Defense Department will appeal the latest decision, which charged the arbitration panel with the responsibility of determining the exact amount of money owed to the Commission.
- ... The annual meeting of the Commission's Medical Advisory Council will be held May 11 in San Antonio. It will follow the annual gathering of the Texas Medical Association and the Texas Ophthalmological Association.

MANSOLO GETS NEW APPOINTMENT

During a recent meeting of the Commission's governing board, Ron P. Mansolo was selected as the agency's new deputy director of programs. Mansolo joined the Commission on November 1, 1971. He has held various posts with the Commission including placement specialist, regional director/counselor with the San Antonio Association for the Blind. He will be responsible for planning, directing and coordinating the development and improvement of the agency's client services programs.



Ron Mansolo

REPORT is an official publication of the State Commission for the Blind. It is available free of charge to any individual requesting to be placed on the mailing list. News articles should be forwarded to the Public Information Office, P.O. Box 12866, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/475-3245. This newsletter is available on tape upon request.

William C. Conner, Chairman
John C. Wilson, Executive Director
Rolando Garza, Editor
Jean Wakefield, Editorial Assistant
Mike Pavia, Layout/Design





Nancy Galloway, supervisor with the Commission's Visually Handicapped Children's Program, poses for a picture in front of one of several billboards found throughout Britain bringing attention to that country's work in the area of services to blind and visually disabled persons. Galloway reported that it was not uncommon to find figures such as that of the child reading braille on several London sidewalks.

OUR READERS WRITE

"I don't know who the party or person was who started mailing it (REPORT) to me but I am glad that they did because I enjoy reading it and hearing about what the agency is doing... You see, the Commission is really nothing new to me because I worked with one of the best operators or field super-

visors that the Commission ever had or at least I think so and I refer to the late A.B. Tipps. I have been in all of the district offices (Commission Offices)... So I would appreciate it if your office will see that I continue to get a copy of your Report... Thanks again."

---James R. Parker
Liberty Hill

"I just wanted you to know that Barbara Parker (El Paso VR teacher) was helpful in every way possible. She did provide me with a white cane and secured for me the talking calculator... I do appreciate what the State Commission for the Blind and people like Barbara Parker are doing."

---Agency client in El Paso

**GOVERNOR WHITE
MAKES
APPOINTMENTS**

Shortly before press time Governor Mark White announced three appointments to the State Commission for the Blind for terms expiring February 1, 1991. Walter Musler of San Antonio was reappointed for an additional six-year term. The new members are Dr. Robert Peters of Tyler and Lewis Timberlake of Austin. The next issue of the REPORT will feature a brief sketch and photograph of these three appointees.

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