



COMMERCIALIZATION OF INTERSTATE REST STOPS

POLICY POSITION

ISSUE:

The Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 grants blind vendors a priority for the operation of vending facilities in federal buildings across the country. This priority was extended when Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956. Many blind business people throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and further their business and professional goals.

NAMA agrees that America's roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement and increased investment in our nation's infrastructure is needed. However, policies that incentivize such investment should be designed to create jobs. Commercializing rest areas as a means of creating revenue for America's infrastructure needs would eliminate jobs, while at the same time undercutting several important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy. Commercializing rest areas would take away employment opportunities for blind vendors many of whom are dependent on rest area operations for their livelihood.

The Trump Administration and some in Congress have proposed allowing expanded business operations beyond vending at Interstate rest areas, reversing decade's old policy. Acknowledging the budget challenges many states and the federal government face, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, this proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work and/or business, virtually overnight.

NAMA POSITION:

NAMA opposes any efforts at the federal, state or local level to privatize or commercialize Interstate Rest Stops that does not include the priority for blind businesspeople established in the Randolph-Sheppard Act.