**Resolution 2010-11**

**Regarding National Industries for the Blind and the Definition of “Employment Outcome” in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

 WHEREAS, blind people are capable of working with the sighted, playing with the sighted, and living with the sighted on terms of complete equality; and

 WHEREAS, the blind seek the day when we no longer need to assert our civil rights to be given equal opportunities and to be treated on terms of equality with our sighted peers, but that day will only come if our lives are fully integrated with those of the sighted; and

 WHEREAS, in enacting the Rehabilitation Act, Congress found that the blind have the right to enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society; and

 WHEREAS, following congressional intent, in January 2001 the U.S. Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) issued regulations that redefined the term “employment outcome” as an outcome in which an individual with a disability enters full or part-time competitive employment in an integrated setting; and

 WHEREAS, before redefining what constitutes an employment outcome recognizable in the vocational rehabilitation program, many state vocational rehabilitation agencies limited their blind clients’ opportunities to sheltered, nonintegrated settings, relegating them to working in positions that pay less than their sighted counterparts receive in the competitive labor market, to poor opportunity for career advancement, and to work settings with little opportunity to work alongside their sighted peers; and

 WHEREAS, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) has recently requested that RSA issue guidelines stating that an employment outcome recognizable by the vocational rehabilitation program include placement of individuals who are blind and are working in NIB’s AbilityOne network of agencies; and

 WHEREAS, NIB’s primary purpose for requesting a change in the definition of “employment outcome” is to give state vocational rehabilitation agencies the ability to count placement in NIB programs as successful employment outcomes for purposes of meeting RSA’s mandatory standards and indicators; and

 WHEREAS, although at present NIB’s policy is that the blind should be paid at least the minimum wage, several NIB workshops do not adhere to this policy, and NIB officials maintain that they cannot require the workshops to do so; and

 WHEREAS, blind people must be allowed to determine for themselves whether an NIB program is their desired employment outcome and not be subjected to a vocational rehabilitation system incentivized to achieve easy placements: Now, therefore,

 BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind in Convention assembled this seventh day of July, 2010, in the city of Dallas, Texas, that this organization condemn and deplore National Industries for the Blind’s campaign to change the definition of an “employment outcome”; and

 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization strongly urge the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration to retain the current definition of “employment outcome,” which will continue to place the emphasis of rehabilitation on employment in integrated settings rather than on easy closure of cases or the support of National Industries for the Blind.