



1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 54

2 (As Amended by Senate Amendments No. 1 & 2)

3 WHEREAS, The provision of a free, appropriate public  
4 education for a student with a visual impairment can occur only  
5 with the proper concentrated services, equipment,  
6 appropriately certified staff, and access to education; and

7 WHEREAS, Children and youth who are visually impaired face  
8 unique and significant barriers related to their instruction  
9 that profoundly affect most aspects of the educational process,  
10 including the impact of ever changing technology and the world  
11 it encompasses; and

12 WHEREAS, Blindness and visual impairments are often  
13 considered secondary disabilities, thus the specialized  
14 educational needs of the blind and visually impaired are rarely  
15 fully addressed; and

16 WHEREAS, Children and youth with visual impairments are  
17 guaranteed an education in the least restrictive setting,  
18 determined on an individual basis, meaning that they are  
19 entitled to be integrated as fully as possible into the regular  
20 classroom, as appropriate; and

21 WHEREAS, Full access to education depends upon an

1 educational environment that utilizes the appropriate  
2 materials and properly and fully trained staff and provides for  
3 direct communication between staff, students, parents, and  
4 peers; and

5 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired  
6 should become the go-to facility for best teaching practices  
7 regarding programs for children with visual impairments and the  
8 statewide center for training, technical assistance, outreach,  
9 and specialized curriculum development; and

10 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired  
11 should include on-going training and technical assistance for  
12 itinerant, mainstream, and private school educators; and

13 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired  
14 should include specific programming on visual impairments for  
15 teaching and rehabilitation professionals from both the State  
16 Board of Education and the Department of Human Services; and

17 WHEREAS, While unemployment in the nation continues to  
18 drop, the unemployment rate for people with visual impairments  
19 is over 70%; and

20 WHEREAS, There should be greater access to transitional  
21 services for students who are blind or visually impaired

1 entering vocational rehabilitation services and employment;  
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Successful transitional programs may result in  
4 better services and jobs, knowledgeable self-advocates, and  
5 achievement of competitive outcomes; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL  
7 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
8 CONCURRING HEREIN, that there is created the Joint Task Force  
9 on Blind and Visually Impaired Educational Options, consisting  
10 of the following members, appointed as follows:

11 (1) the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of  
12 the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
13 and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives  
14 shall each appoint one member;

15 (2) the Governor shall appoint a parent representative  
16 from the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired and 3  
17 regional parent representatives, one each from northern,  
18 central, and southern Illinois;

19 (3) the following entities shall each appoint one  
20 member: the State Board of Education, the Department of  
21 Human Services, the Illinois School for the Visually  
22 Impaired, the Illinois Association of Regional  
23 Superintendents of Schools, the LightHouse for the Blind  
24 and Visually Impaired, the Illinois School for the Visually

1 Impaired Alumni Association, the National Federation of  
2 the Blind of Illinois, the Illinois Council of the Blind,  
3 Early Intervention, the Illinois Association for Education  
4 and Rehabilitation, the Illinois Vision Leadership  
5 Council, the Philip J. Rock Center, the Helen Keller  
6 National Center, the Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors,  
7 Illinois Parents of the Visually Impaired, the Blind  
8 Services Planning Council, the Illinois School for the  
9 Visually Impaired's Advisory Board, the Visual  
10 Disabilities education program at Northern Illinois  
11 University, and the Specialist in Low Vision and Blindness  
12 education program at Illinois State University; and be it  
13 further

14 RESOLVED, That the State representative and State senator  
15 who represent the districts that are home to the Illinois  
16 School for the Visually Impaired shall serve as co-chairpersons  
17 of the Task Force; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That all members of the Task Force shall serve  
19 without compensation; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the duty of the Task Force is to undertake a  
21 comprehensive and thorough review of the education of and  
22 services available to the blind and visually impaired children  
23 of this State with the intent of making recommendations that

1 would recognize the need for delivering full educational  
2 services to a blind or visually impaired student, ensure that  
3 schools have the most updated and adequate equipment to provide  
4 services to blind and visually impaired students, and recognize  
5 the need for teachers trained in the unique needs of blind and  
6 visually impaired students; recommending research-based  
7 methods and procedures to develop curricula for blind and  
8 visually impaired students; and providing a comprehensive  
9 review of the needs and operation of all educational entities  
10 providing services to students who are blind or visually  
11 impaired, including the Illinois School for the Visually  
12 Impaired; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Task Force should look towards states  
14 that have successful, independent, and adequate educational  
15 models for students with visual impairments, such as the  
16 Washington State School for the Blind; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education and the  
18 Department of Human Services shall together administer and  
19 prepare all reports deemed necessary in conjunction with the  
20 Task Force's activities; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Task Force may request assistance from  
22 any entity necessary or useful for the performance of the Task  
23 Force's duties; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall report its  
2 recommendations to the General Assembly on or before December  
3 31, 2008; and be it further

4           RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be  
5 delivered to the Governor, the State Board of Education, the  
6 Department of Human Services, the Illinois School for the  
7 Visually Impaired, the Illinois Association of Regional  
8 Superintendents of Schools, the LightHouse for the Blind and  
9 Visually Impaired, the Illinois School for the Visually  
10 Impaired Alumni Association, the National Federation of the  
11 Blind of Illinois, the Illinois Council of the Blind, Early  
12 Intervention, the Illinois Association for Education and  
13 Rehabilitation, the Illinois Vision Leadership Council, the  
14 Philip J. Rock Center, the Helen Keller National Center, the  
15 Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors, Illinois Parents of the  
16 Visually Impaired, the Blind Services Planning Council, the  
17 Illinois School for the Visually Impaired's Advisory Board, the  
18 Visual Disabilities education program at Northern Illinois  
19 University, and the Specialist in Low Vision and Blindness  
20 education program at Illinois State University.