Legislative Update by Jerry Lapidakis

COMMITTEE DRAFTING TWO BILLS

Juliette Sterkens, David Seligman and Jerry Lapidakis have been working with Rep. Jonathon Brostoff’s office to draft legislation to support people with hearing loss. After our presentation at the Legislative Day, last April, Rep. Brostoff asked his staff to work with us to draft legislation to address these concerns. Our committee is working with the legislative attorneys from LRB (Legislative Review Board) to develop language that will gain support, be introduced and passed in the Legislature. We are proposing two bills that address the issues presented last April. Once introduced, it will be very important for all HLAA members, and anyone with hearing loss, to contact their legislators and ask them to support these measures.

HEARING LOOPS IN STATE BUILDINGS (LRB-0406)

The first proposed bill addresses the need for hearing loops in state owned, leased or state occupied buildings in spaces that accommodate more than 15 people. Any construction, renovation of would require installation of a hearing loop system. The Department of Administration can waive this requirement if the installation of a hearing loop conflicts with other legal requirements, or the cost is prohibitive. Before approving such an exemption, the Department shall consider alternative measures such as portable loops or FM systems.

We (the committee) recently met and suggested changes to the draft and forwarded them to the drafting attorneys. One suggested addition was to add reference to compliance with ADA. Our thinking was although we believe hearing loops are the preferred assistive listening system, the ADA does allow for a variety of choices that should be recognized as well.

TELECOILS (LRB-0403)

The second bill requires audiologists and hearing instrument specialists to inform and demonstrate the use of telecoils to clients. Here again, we requested broadening the scope by inserting language that recognizes the requirements of the ADA relating to telecoils, telephones and assistive listening systems.

We have submitted our suggested changes to the drafting attorneys and hope to have the revised draft sometime in February. Once we have a final version, it is vitally important that all of us reach out to our legislators to inform them of these bills and ask for their support.

ONCE THE BILLS ARE FINALIZXED, IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE CONTACT OUR RESPECITIVE LEGISLATORS TO GAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THESE IMPORTANT MEANSURES.