

Governor's Council on Blindness and Low Vision (GCBLV)

Full Council Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2026

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Amy Porterfield
Erin Pawlus
Mike Gordon
David Steinmetz
Nathan Pullen
Jonathan Pringle

Members Absent

Bea Shapiro
Annette Reichman
Donald Porterfield

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Stephanie Johnson
Joyceline Elliot
Maria Bravo
Steve Tepper

Minutes

Call to Order

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:42 p.m.

Roll Call

Lindsey Powers called roll and established that a quorum was present.

Call to the Public

A call was made to the public with no response forthcoming.

Approval of Minutes

Amy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2025 GCBLV Full Council meeting as written. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

Member Reports

Chair Report

Bob Kresmer stated there had been a lot of Legislative changes as well as changes within the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) that the council would hear about. He noted that Annette Reichman was unable to attend the council meeting, although the council would be holding a meeting with the ASDB Board.

Annual Report

Bob Kresmer stated that all members received the 2025 GCBLV Annual Report and inquired whether council members were ready to vote on approving the report. Jonathan Pringle motioned to approve the report. David Steinmetz seconded the report. The report was approved by unanimous voice vote.

RSA Updates

Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to work through challenges with the new case management system, InFormed, specifically with reporting. She noted that it took several attempts to obtain the correct data and RSA had requested enhancements to assist with that process. working to align all reporting functions. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA had interviewed a candidate for the Senior Program Manager position that would oversee Region 3. Kristen Mackey stated the Employment Outreach team had 2 specialists that were helping to connect VRCs and clients with employers and she was excited to see more clients connected with employment. Kristen

Mackey stated that state funding was level for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and ILB as well as at the Federal level. Ms. Mackey stated the Department of Economic Security (DES) had undergone a Sunset Audit, which would require all councils to complete a Conflict-of-Interest Form as well as Open Meeting Law training. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had developed a corrective action plan for the 2024 visit, which had been affected by the government shutdowns. She noted that RSA had requested an extension for April 30th. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would also begin planning for the new State Plan for 2027-2032. Ms. Mackey stated the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II for Adult Education had moved under the Department of Labor. She noted that RSA under OSERS could be under an Interagency Agreement and could potentially move to the Department of Labor or the Health and Human Services department. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA had reached out to a council member regarding any interview questions or scoring metrics. Kristen Mackey stated she had asked Bob Kresmer about some of the interview questions, although the ADOA had different scoring methods for interviews. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding outreach and public relations. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had received a draft VR orientation video and a draft of collaborative materials as well as videos for ILB and BEP. Jonathan Pringle inquired regarding RSA's high staff vacancy. Kristen Mackey stated the Senior Program Manager would be responsible for filling several supervisor and staff vacancies although RSA did struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff. She noted that she continued to advocate for increased salaries to fill positions.

Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP was in the design phase of InFormed and it was going well. She noted that 2 operators had finished their training and 2 new individuals had started training. Joyceline Elliot stated there had been a 2-day training in December for vendors as well as a monthly APOC meeting and 2 town hall meetings. Ms. Elliot stated there were new vending sites at a VA clinic in Phoenix, 1 at the Glendale Civic Center, 1 at the Surprise Community Center and 1 at the Winslow Prison. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the troop facilities at Fort Huachuca. Joyceline Elliot stated that vendors had met with attorneys regarding the contract which would end in June and she was unsure about the outcome.

Maria Bravo stated the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program continued to clean up the case data and to ensure that clients receive

services. She noted that ILOB was also working with partners and collaborators to develop reports in InFormed. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding staffing in the ILOB program. Maria Bravo stated that once the Senior Program Manager position was filled, the ILOB program could begin building their team and adding positions where possible. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the time spent on case management versus teaching. Maria Bravo stated that staff were spending approximately 90% of their time performing case management. She noted that clients had informed choice and were able to choose their preference of receiving services in-house or from community partners. Kristen Mackey added that the ILOB team had come together to discuss what was working and how they could serve clients with a limited budget. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the wait list of ILOB services. Maria Bravo stated that staff continued to work to serve clients on the wait list and to serve individuals statewide.

Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been following several Legislative bills concerning blind and low vision individuals. She stated HB 2044, Vulnerable Pedestrians, created enhanced criminal penalties if a driver recklessly or negligently harmed or seriously harmed a pedestrian. HB 4077, ASDB Capital Improvements, Financial Authority, expands the authority to finance capital improvements. She noted that SB 1011, Appropriation for Older Individuals Who Are Blind, would appropriate a one-time million in funds to expand services to senior experiencing vision loss. Ms. Porterfield stated the goal was to advocate for the funding to become permanent. SB 1576, Certification Requirements, Private School Teachers, Blind and Visually Impaired Pupils, required the State Board of Education to establish certification requirements for private school teachers serving blind and visually impaired students. She noted that SB 1690, Visually Impaired Voters, Access Procedures, would expand access to early ballots and electronic ballots similar to the process for military overseas. She added that SB 1760, ASDB Capital Improvements, Financing Authority, was the companion bill to HB 4077, on expanding ASDB finance authority. SB 1824, Blindness Compensatory Skills, Teaching Certificates, would require the State Board of Education to ensure high quality expanded core curriculum. Amy Porterfield stated that ASDB had been in a financial deficit for many years and had requested funds to fix the building in which 92% was

uninhabitable and 6% was in disrepair. She noted the school was able to sell a portion of the property and lease for 7 years. Amy Porterfield stated that ASDB would house the school for the deaf students at Copper Creek Elementary and blind students would go to a school based on their IEP. She noted that those students would be served in cluster sites and would have use of resource rooms. Amy Porterfield stated there was a lot of concern in the community regarding equity and how long students would have access to the resource rooms. Bob Kresmer stated the co-ops would remain to serve students although it did not address rural or tribal areas. Amy Porterfield stated that ASDB was considering offering a cluster site in northern Arizona to accommodate students in those areas. Amy Porterfield stated that RSA had moved to a new model of service delivery within the ILB program and the committee had questions regarding the consistency and training of the case management system. She noted the committee had recommended developing a workgroup to implement Best Practices on how to conserve funding and also best serve clients. Kristen Mackey stated that she had received the request from the committee and was open to exploring policies and Best Practices on how to provide services to ILB clients on a limited budget.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the library had received DA2 digital talking book devices that patrons could try for one month. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the correct method for mailing the devices back to the library. Erin Pawlus stated the library had free matter mailing that could be used for mailing library materials. Bob Kresmer inquired how patrons could receive assistance with any of the library devices. Erin Pawlus stated the library had staff that could answer questions regarding devices, or they could get the answer to assist the patron. Ms. Pawlus stated there would be a travel museum, which would share a replica of the Liberty Bell, and more information could be found on their website: america250az.org. She noted the library had been asked to provide an audio description, which would be on the website also. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the library offered smart speakers. Erin Pawlus stated the library did not, although Sun Sounds did offer them.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI had moved individuals into different apartments in Phoenix due to the growing concerns surrounding the homeless population in that area. She noted the new apartment building was more secure and individuals felt safer. Amy Porterfield stated that SAAVI staff had been invited to go to Ghana to visit 2 schools for the blind and assist with advocacy efforts and different Assistive Technology (AT). Ms. Porterfield stated SAAVI was working with the Department of Education on providing professional development for interacting with blind and low vision individuals and for providing access to digital content.

Helen Keller National Center

Jonathan Pringle stated the HKNC was gearing up for the summer programs and that things were going well. He added that HKNC had a new Director with new ideas such as an adaptive aquatics program that would take participants surfing. Mr. Pringle stated HKNC staff had attended the Phoenix Day at the Capital and had advocated for deafblind individuals. Jonathan Pringle stated the organization was concerned regarding the staff shortages within the SBVID program and that he was pleased counselors would have the opportunity to visit different organizations to learn about the different services offered.

National Federation of the Blind

Amy Porterfield stated the NFBA had participated in the Phoenix Day at the Capital and that 3 bills had been introduced that concerned blind and low vision individuals. Ms. Porterfield stated that NFBA members also attended the Washington seminar and advocated for issues related to the Rehabilitation Act, IDEA, and the Americans Return to Work Act. She noted that members advocated for a pilot program that would follow SSDI recipients and for every \$2.00, allow them to lose \$1.00 gradually.

AIB

David Steinmetz stated Arizona Industries for the Blind continued to look at opportunities to increase employment for blind and low vision individuals and to continue discussions about new lines of business. He noted that AIB staff also attended the Washington seminar and met with Legislators to discuss items concerning the blindness population. David Steinmetz stated AIB had a new case management system and that all staff had equal access.

Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment

The next meeting of the GCBLV Full Council will be on May 15, 2026 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment of Meeting

Amy Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.