# National Federation of the Blind

# 2022 National Convention

# Opening General Session

## July 8, 2022

## 9:00 a.m. – 12:42 p.m. CT

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(Gavel pounding).

MARK RICCOBONO: The 2022 convention of the National Federation of the Blind in person is in order!

(Enthusiastic cheering and applause from crowd).

We're back together again!!!!

How about that.

No mute button required!

(Laughter.)

(Cheering).

Except I would like your attention, please. If I could have your attention... if I could have your attention please. If I could please have your attention --

(Crowd quieting).

-- we'd like to begin with this morning's invocation. You will get to make noise again, trust me.

(Laughter.)

Thank you.

For this morning's invocation, I'd like to introduce the president of the Tidewater chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, member of the congregation at Beth El in Norfolk, Virginia. He serves now as the chairman of the NFB in Judaism group. Here for our helping invocation is Stuart Prost.

(Applause.)

STUART: Today is the opening session of the 82nd annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind. The first in-person session since 2019. Today is truly special. And in true Jewish tradition, there is a special prayer you say at any celebration where there is a big gathering of family and friends. I'm going to read it to you today in English, and I'm going to sing it to you in Hebrew. And if anybody knows it, they can join in.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the world, who has kept us alive, who has sustained us and brought us to this season. May we be able to come to many more of these conventions and to celebrate in 2040, when the Federation will be 100 years old.

(Some cheering).

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu... (singing prayer in Hebrew).

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: I don't know if maybe the door prize folks are stuck on Zoom. I don't know...

SCOTT LABARRE: Oh, no! We're right here.

MARK RICCOBONO: Oh, in person!

SPEAKER: I would like to give away a door prize to celebrate the first in-person convention in years. Remember, stand up, yell, scream if your name is called. The first door prize is $200!

(Cheering and applause).

The winner is Alice Hebert! We don't have the state for you, Alice, but Alice Hebert, if you're in the room, jump up and down...

MARK RICCOBONO: Alice, are you out there?

SPEAKER: Okay, not here. How about David Bradburn? Are you in this room right now?

MARK RICCOBONO: David Bradburn from Humanware.

SPEAKER: No, no one wants a door prize, I guess?

MARK RICCOBONO: They're confused you don't have to send an e-mail to claim your prize.

SPEAKER: Jeanetta Price.

MARK RICCOBONO: Wait, they found David Bradburn.

SPEAKER: Okay, maybe we'll get one for Jeanetta too. This is sponsored by the Baltimore chapter.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay! I was saying up here earlier, it's been a long time but it sure seems familiar.

(Applause.)

Here to kick off this morning's session for our welcoming ceremonies, on behalf of our 2022 convention host affiliate, the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana, here's Pam Allen!

(Cheering and applause).

PAM ALLEN: Good morning, my Federation family, and welcome to New Orleans! Laissez les bon temps rouler!

(Cheering).

(Band playing instrumental music in the background) (beads clattering as Pam hands Mark beads)

PAM ALLEN: Hang on, Mark, I'm untangling your beads!

(Camera panning the general session ballroom -- band and costumed dancers weaving through crowd as music plays and beads are passed around. Crowd is cheering and whistling).

(Crowd cheering on band as band marches through crowd).

(Crowd clapping rhythmically to the music of the band) (band has reached the front of the room and is gathering and playing by the foot of the stage) (band finishes on rousing final note -- and the crowd goes wild) (band beginning a new song) (crowd cheering and applauding as the band finishes playing) (the tuba leads band into another number) all right, all right, welcome to New Orleans!

Welcome to New Orleans! National Federation of the Blind, we are thrilled to have you with us! All right, how you feeling?

(Applause.)

All right, my name is Daryl Durham, the executive director of the Trume Artist Collective, and we're thrilled to have you in our city. We just heard the Jackson All Stars, and we'll hear from them in a little bit.

(Applause.)

I want to plug that tonight, my soul band will be playing at your dance. So please come out. We're really going to hit you with some true New Orleans soul and old-school soul. You've love it. Right now I'm going to ask my friend Carinda Marie Leveaux, a cultural bearer of the city, to give you a little bit of a demonstration to talk about what it means to be from New Orleans.

CARINDA: Good morning. So I'm Big Queen Carinda Leveaux, and I am a Black Indian, the original guardians of the land, and right now I'm a renegade queen and also have my own group. And these suits that you see, we like to call them suits, we don't really call them costumes, because they're a part of our regalia. And so everything we do is one bead at a time. It takes about a year to make a suit. So people like me, only I sew my suit. But when we make marchers' suits, we enlist the help of the community, the neighborhood, to make them one bead at a time

The beading is part of the tradition. As we bead, we basically put spirit inside of this. Because as you're beading and meditating, you're putting your energy inside of the suit.

And the feathers, well, this is kind in reference to the tradition. So when we talk about the tradition -- some people will say they are paying homage to the Indigenous traditions here in America. And for others, they'll say we're paying homage to our African ancestors, and both of those masking traditions use feathers.

DARYL: And how long does it take a suit?

CARINDA: It takes about a year, but people like me who do things last minute, it will take me about 6 months.

(Laughter.)

DARYL: And we'll ask Ms. Carinda to send us out with a homage to the spirits.

CARINDA) (playing the drums and singing in Indigenous language) big queen of the nation, of the whole nation.

(Continuing singing) (cheering and applause).

DARYL: Thank you, you guys have been wonderful. Look forward to seeing you tonight. I'm going to give it back to Pam Allen.

PAM ALLEN: Let's hear it again for the NOLA Soul Collective, and we're celebrating the culture and heritage and the diversity of our great city, and of the National Federation of the Blind.

(Applause.)

And now, for a brief cooking demonstration, I know everyone has been enjoying the delicious food all week. And so I want to introduce from the New Orleans School of Cooking, our Chef Harriet.

(Cheering and applause).

HARRIET: Welcome, everyone, welcome to my hometown. It truly is great to see everyone here. What I'm doing this morning is, I hope you can smell it.

In my pot, I have on the burner only 6 ingredients: About 6 tablespoons of butter, a teaspoon of vanilla, 4 ounces of milk, pecan pieces, or you can leave them whole, 3/4 of a cup of white sugar and 3/4 cup of packed brown sugar.

I'm stirring my pot. And this is important, everyone, cooking syrup to 240 degrees.

I have another test that I always use when I'm making praline. I'll drop a little bit in, and if it's 240, I should be able to make a small ball in a cup of water. As I push the syrup together, it will make a very small ball.

Because 240 is called the small ball temperature.

When you make enough batches, we do that in New Orleans, you can feel it. You can feel the syrup getting thicker.

So I'm going to give it a try now.

(Lifting the cup of water).

Try to leave behind the pecans. We just want the syrup. And drop it in to see if you can make a little ball with it. Be careful. You don't want to burn yourself. And I've been able, in this cup of water, to form a small ball of the syrup with my fingers.

Now I have to pull this syrup off and cool it down. Because if I don't cool it down, I'm not going to get a praline that you can pick up off the table.

I learned to do this back in -- I'm 81.

(Applause.)

I expect applause for being 81!

(Laughter.)

I've been doing this for 70 years. Some of us learn to cook, some of us learn to sew -- I never learned to sew, that was always an impossibility, but I did learn to cook very well.

(Laughter.)

So I'm stirring the pot. I have the handle, the pot is tilted. The reason why I'm stirring is to let the syrup cool down, not an awful lot, but it has to cool. And I would ask my grandmother, how long do I have to stir?? Because my grandmother was famous for her one-hour roux. And I could not see me doing this more an hour! But she would say "until the pot talks to you". And by that, she meant the wooden spoon, and use a WOODEN spoon. It doesn't conduct heat. If you use a stainless steel spoon, honestly, that stainless steel is going to conduct the heat from the syrup and you're going to burn your hand. So be very careful. And I can hear that soft rubbing between the spoon and the bottom of the pot.

So now I'm going to drop my pralines. And I'm just putting my spoon in and pulling pralines out. And this is... you try to go as fast as you can, because remember, the syrup is cooling off.

As it cools down, it turns into a solid. And you want to try, anyway, to get as many pralines out of this pot as you can. Keep them airtight once they cool down, and they will stay very fresh, very fresh, with that original flavor, for about 3 days. But let me tell you... they never last 3 days.

(Laughter.)

Never!

Trust me.

(Spooning syrup mixture on to a sheet of parchment paper by the spoonful).

Trust me, this was my go-to gift for teachers, for Christmas, for Easter. I would wrap them up in an attractive bag and give them out as gifts. God, now I can remember how many gifts I was making every year! And honestly, they don't go bad. If they lose that freshness, have a sweet potato bar! Big chicken, sweet potato bar, with green peas. Crinkle them up and use them as a topping on a sweet potato bar. You can't go wrong with pralines, I'm telling you. This is it. And we have pralines for each and every one of you

(Thunderous applause and cheering).

Thank you! Thank you. Now, I have some variations and I know I have to make it quick. I know not everyone can eat nuts. We have nut allergies today. My oldest grandson, Ben, has a terrible nut allergy. When I make a praline for Ben, I use a cereal in place of the nuts. I don't put the cereal in the pot to cook. When the syrup reaches that magic 240, soft ball stage, I take it off the fire. I take it off the heat. And I add a cup and a half of the cereal, the same amount as the pecans, to the pot before I stir to cool it down. And the cereal I use is snap, crackle, and pop

(Cheering).

Rice Krispies! And it cools the syrup down quicker when I put the cereal in last. The syrup will really cool down.

You want to make chocolate pralines?

(Crowd cheering "yes).

All you need is 1/2 cup of chocolate pieces. And again, I put the chocolate -- oh, what kind of chocolate? Semisweet.

Now, I've made white chocolate pralines, I've made milk chocolate, and semisweet chocolate pralines. Sometimes I put in a tablespoon of peanut butter. And then you have a Reese's praline.

PAM ALLEN: I'm sure everyone can smell her pralines! So let's give a hand for the outstanding pralines.

(Applause.)

And I know some of you have taken advantage of the cooking classes at New Orleans School of Cooking already. So thank you, Chef Harriet.

And last, we have a leader of tomorrow from our Louisiana affiliate to tell you about herself and welcome you to our great city!

(Applause.)

SPEAKER: Good morning, everyone!

(Applause.)

Welcome to New Orleans!

(Cheering).

Or, I could say, New Orleans, the Crescent City, or the Big Easy!

(Laughter and cheering).

I hope you have enjoyed all the rain, and best of all, the heat and humidity!

(Laughter.)

No, I'm just joking. I mean, the food and most important of all, the beignets!

(Cheering and applause).

These are my favorite! I am really happy and excited to hear all the white canes tapping on Canal Street.

(Cheering).

What a great awareness!

Oh, oops! I forgot to introduce myself!

(Laughter.)

My name is Nardis Qarinipur.

I'm 10 years old and in 5th grade.

(Cheering and.

(Applause.)

This is my first national convention!

(Cheering and applause).

I have been with NFB for about 3 years.

After joining NFB, so many great things have happened with all the help and support of my wonderful teachers. I have accomplished so much, such as I won second place in the Braille Readers are Leaders.

(Cheering and applause).

I won first place in the Louisiana Braille Challenge!

(Cheering and applause).

I was a finalist in the National Braille Challenge in California!

(Applause.)

I've met so many wonderful people at the NFB. My favorite event is the BELL camp in Louisiana.

(Cheering).

It is a lot of fun. We also learned many skills and are taught to be an independent blind person.

(Applause.)

Braille has impacted my life in a positive way and has helped me gain literacy and independence.

(Cheering and applause).

Conventions like this is the best place to start and meet many blind people and learn from each other.

(Applause.)

I always like to end with this: Blindness is not a disability, but a different ability.

(Crowd cheering wildly).

So believe in yourself, and follow your dreams!

(Cheering).

Have a great convention, and time in New Orleans. And don't forget to try the beignets in Cafe du Monde! Braille rocks!!!!!

(Crowd applauding and cheering).

PAM ALLEN: Thank you, Nardis, and you can see we're in great hands at the National Federation of the Blind. Thank you and welcome to New Orleans!

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: No, they don't want to give a door prize, I don't know why.

DOOR PRIZE ANNOUNCER: I have good news and bad news. The bad news is the person who was supposed to have won the door prize wasn't here. So we've got another name for 200 bucks, and the name is Jeanetta Price. Stand up and yell and scream and stay up, even if we've seen you yet, but we haven't seen you yet. Yell, scream!

All right, how about Joyce Martin?

(Yelling).

Stand up, raise your hand, put up an umbrella, well, never mind.

MARK RICCOBONO: Nobody's here, man!

(Laughter.)

DOOR PRIZE ANNOUNCER: Nobody wants a door prize.

MARK RICCOBONO: Keep going, Bennett. Keep going.

BENNET: How about Tyler Hoppe? Are you here?

Okay, we'll try one more... Tim Falberg.

He's here. Stay there. Don't disappear on us or you won't get the money! 200 bucks, thank you!

MARK RICCOBONO: Tim, we got Tim!

(Applause.)

Let's hear it for the NFB of Louisiana!

(Applause.)

Now we're going to move to the opening part of the opening ceremonies which is always special, but especially today now that we're back together. Here for our celebration of freedom is the president of our National Association of Blind Veterans. He's retired from the United States Army after 20 years of service.

(Cheering and applause).

We've heard from him a couple times. But I think this is his first time taking the physical podium here at our convention. Here's Vernon Humphrey!

(Stars and Stripes Forever playing).

VERNON HUMPHREY: I like the choice of music.

(Laughter.)

Thank you, Riccobono, and thank you my Federation family.

(Cheering).

It's an honor to start us off, and I'm going to ask you to please -- there's a couple aisles the color guard is going to go down. So please keep the aisles clear. Color guard, post! (Color guard leader shouting out cadence)

VERNON HUMPHREY: Ladies and gentlemen, please stand if you're able and join me in saying the pledge of allegiance.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Please remain standing, and if you feel like it, join the beautiful voice of Angelina in singing our national anthem.

(Crowd cheering).

ANGELINA: O say can you see.

By the dawn's early light

what so proudly we hailed

at the twilight's last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars

through the perilous fight

o'er the ramparts we watched

were so gallantly streaming?

And the rockets' red glare

the bombs bursting in air.

Gave proof through the night

that our flag was still there.

Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave

o'er the land of the free

and the home of the brave.

(Cheering and applause).

VALERIE YINGLING: Thank you, Angelina.

I'm sure you all preferred her doing that to me.

Following Angelina is our wonderful Performing Arts Division with another song and then we're going to introduce our veterans. So... performing arts?

CHOIR (singing a capella).

God bless America.

Land that I love.

Stand beside her and guide her

through the night with the light from above.

From the mountains to the prairies

to the oceans, white with foam!

God bless America,

my home sweet home.

God bless America,

my home sweet home.

(Applause.)

VERNON HUMPHREY: Thank you, Performing Arts. I'd also like to thank the color guard, and their participants are, with the Army standard, Matt Gindlesberger from Pennsylvania. Navy standard, Carolyn Campbell from Florida. Air Force standard, Harvey Gary from Maryland.

(Applause.)

No offense against those service flags, but my favorite, Old Glory, by Doug Ingram from Florida.

(Applause.)

Coast Guard, Guy Kelly from Maryland.

(Applause.)

Hoo-rah, Marine Corps, Susan Castellis from Nebraska.

And finally, Roy Stinson from Arizona.

(Applause.)

They were supported by the Jackson All-Stars. We need to thank them again.

(Applause.)

With that said, after the color -- I'm going to dismiss the color guard and then we're going to introduce the veterans so those people can put those heavy flags down. Color guard, dismissed!

(Cheering and applause).

March 'em outta here!

(Color guard leader calling cadence) (band playing lively rendition of When The Saints Go Marching In).

(Crowd clapping along in rhythm).

SINGER: Oh, when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in.

I wanna be in that number

when the saints go marching in!

Oh, when the saints

go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in...

Oh, how I want to be in that number.

When saints go marching in. (Band continues playing while exiting the ballroom)

(Applause.)

VERNON HUMPHREY: Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Federationists, please sit down while the veterans introduce themselves.

DWIGHT: Thank you, please president. This is Dwight Sare, United States Air Force, hailing from the great state of Florida!

(Applause.)

Patrick Callahan, Virginia, Navy, 2006 from 1986, Naval flight officer.

(Performing arts choir humming Battle Hymn of the Republic underneath all the announcements).

Jim Schull, staff sergeant, retired. U.S. Army infantry. 34 years.

(Applause.)

Mishawaka, Indiana.

PFC David Bundy, U.S. Army Reserves 1984 to 1986, Columbia, South Carolina.

(Applause.)

Specialist Trent Tetter, U.S. Army, Desert Storm vet, Columbia, South Carolina.

(Applause.)

Lee Martin, United States Army, Indianapolis, Indiana, Vietnam veteran.

(Applause.)

Gregory Martin, United States Marine Corps, second tank battalion, HS company motor, Maryland.

(Applause.)

Javier Morinales, U.S. Army, 82nd airborne division. I happen to see Theresa here in the audience.

(Applause.)

Bob Pierce, U.S. Air Force, Ohio.

(Applause.)

Ray Sevedra, New Mexico, U.S. Navy retired, anchors aweigh!

(Applause.)

Joel Tivera, U.S. Army staff sergeant retired, medically retired, straight from the state of Florida.

(Applause.)

Charlie Davidson, U.S. Navy, 1984 to '87, serve with a purpose!

(Applause.)

With the great peach state of Georgia, give me your welcome!!!!

(Cheering and applause).

Sharon Park, U.S. Air Force, Arizona!

(Applause.)

Becky Jacobar, U.S. Army, Nevada.

(Applause.)

Ed Jackson, U.S. Army, 101st airborne, Vietnam and Desert Storm, Baltimore, Maryland.

(Applause.)

That's our last veteran, Mr. President.

VERNON HUMPHREY: And I am Vernon Humphrey, retired master sergeant, U.S. Army, U.S. Army Medical Corps, Columbus, Georgia.

(Cheering and applause).

CHOIR: America, America.

God shed his grace on thee.

And crowned thy good with brotherhood

from sea to shining sea!

From sea to shining sea!

(Applause.)

VERNON HUMPHREY: It's been my pleasure to stand up here and introduce these fine people to you, and I couldn't have done it without the support of the Performing Arts and the color guard.

(Applause.)

The thing I have learned while I was in the Army, it's about family. It's about taking care of one another. The Marine Corps has a wonderful saying, semper fi, semper fidelis, always faithful. We're faithful to our family. When I got out of the Army, I was looking for that family I no longer had. And I found it in the Federation. So thank you.

(Applause.)

We greatly appreciate the Federation. We greatly appreciate you, Mr. President. Thank you all for what you have done for us, and hopefully we can continue to do for one another.

Mr. President, on behalf of the National Association of Blind Veterans, I have one of our polo shirts for you. Our gunnery sergeant said it had to be red, kind of like the Marine Corps flag.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much.

VERNON HUMPHREY: Once again thank you, and from the NAVB, it's good to be back together. Welcome to New Orleans, and looking forward to seeing y'all in Houston!

(Cheering and applause).

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you!

Okay, thank you to all of our veterans for your service.

(Cheering and applause).

Shortly -- not right now.

(Crowd members chanting "USA! USA! USA! USA! USA!)

MARK RICCOBONO: They weren't saying "Tracy". They were saying USA! But Tracy Soforenko thought they were calling his name, so he's come to the mic to give us a Give 20 update.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

TRACY SOFORENKO: Thank you, President Riccobono and fellow Federation family! Together, we accomplish more. Our Federation is a vehicle for collective action. When we come together, how much we can achieve. Amazing results. Together, through this dream, this partnership, we're able to accomplish so much more. Our civil rights. New technologies. Passing new laws to help blind people live their dreams. We need each and every one of you to help fund our movement, the work we do together. The way to fund our movement at our convention is our Give 20 campaign. Through this, you also benefit. So let's talk about all of our four funds. Our White Cane fund, our general fund, that helps finance all the things we do in the movement and gives President Riccobono the most latitude about how to deploy our resources. Our tenBroek Fund that provides our building and allows us to have our Jernigan Institute to do the work of this movement.

Our SUN Fund, our rainy day fund, to help ensure that in hard times, we are prepared.

And our Kenneth Jernigan fund that allows individuals to come to their first convention.

For each $20 you give to the Give 20 campaign, you will be placed in a drawing. You might ask, what is that drawing? What could I win? You could win transportation and hotel for 2 at our 2023 convention!

(Cheering).

Yes!

In Houston, Texas. Registration, banquet, and $1,000 walking-around cash. And for each 20 you give, you get one place in a drawing. You get an extra bonus chance if you're already in the Give 20 campaign. So if you give $20 and you get your test results, you would get two chances! If you as well did, if you gave $100, you'd get 5 chances, plus a bonus chance. People participating virtually, you also can participate in this, and we'd love to have you participate in our Give 20 campaign. You might ask, how do I give? How is that all possible? We want to make it really easy. The easiest way to give is to go to nfb.org/give20. Alternatively, you could call, and our agents are standing by to take your calls -- or you can leave a message -- at 410-659-9314, extension 2430.

Now, if you have cash burning a hole in your pocket here at the convention and you just want to give us cash, we'll take your $20 at the Dream Makers Circle table. All of this is possible because WE come together. So far, 273 people have already contributed to our Give 20 campaign, raising 21,21,000 $21,170. And Humanware has generously offered to match the first $50,000 we raise. So your $20 means 40, your $100 means $200! Just like going to Cafe du Monde and getting beignets, you don't leave any in the bag! Don't leave any donations in the bag! Come fund our movement. Donation calls need to be made by Sunday 3:00 p.m. convention time, which is Central time. We eagerly seek your participation in our Give 20 campaign so we can fund our movement and make so much possible for blind people. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Tracy. Here for a quick announcement from Texas is Daniel Martinez.

DANIEL: Thank you, President Riccobono. I'm going to do an announcement in Spanish, so give me a second.

(Making announcement in Spanish).

Thank you very much, everyone.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: And here to talk about the PAC plan is Scott LaBarre!

(PAC Man theme playing along with New Orleans marching band instruments).

SCOTT LABARRE: Good morning my Federation family!!!!!

(Applause.)

Isn't it great to be back together agaaaain!

(Applause.)

And isn't it great that ALL of you, ALL of you, everybody in this room, is heading back to the PAC table? Right? Get up... turn around... oh, wait, that sounds like Bergman.

(Laughter.)

We do have a couple ways to get to the PAC table. If you're facing the stage on the left-hand side of the room, it's in the back. And you can go to our virtual PAC table, which is nfb.org/pac. And we need you to help us out, because so far, we haven't had a lot of activity, and I understand that. But we need to get moving on the PAC plan! And if you sign up for PAC as a new pledge, or, increase your pledge, you'll be entered into some drawings. Now, for each session, if you conduct PAC activity, your name is going to go into a drawing for a $25 gift card. We're giving away at least five every session, okay? But the big one is this: At the banquet, we will be drawing TWO $250 gift cards, one for all of you who increase your PAC, and another drawing for all of you who start a new pledge.

And so, we need you to get back to the PAC table. The easiest way to do it is go to nfb.org/pac, and if you're uncomfortable filling out the PAC form yourself, we have assistants who will do it for you. Or call 877-632-2PAC.

And you can leave a message.

We have competitions -- PAC rat, for affiliates who do the most PAC activity at convention, and the PACyderm for the affiliate that increases its pledge by the greatest percentage. And lastly, we have the PAC mule, which is for the division that does the most activity here. And you will see on our form, there are places to credit the affiliate and a place to credit the division. So please, get back to the PAC table! Help us build the National Federation of the Blind, and we'll talk to ya later!

(Applause.)

Get on the PAC plan, sign up today!

We need your contributions funding our movement, it must be done.

So all our battles can be won!!!!

(Applause.)

BENNETT PROWS: How about a door prize? In honor of the opening ceremonies we have a gift basket with all kinds of Louisiana goodies in it, including pralines and gumbo stuff. It's all good, it's great stuff. And we've got 50 bucks to go with it, and the winner is Gloria Mills Hicks.

(Cheering).

Sounds like... it got a standup. And please stay up, even though we recognize you, because as soon as you sit down, you disappear!

(Laughter.)

Gloria Mills Hicks. We got her!

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay, thank you.

We are going to move quickly to the roll call of states.

(Applause.)

And we're going to start with Alabama, Alaska, and Arizona. I want to let you know that there are microphones in the aisles on the right side of the aisle, in these aisles: The opposite side of Connecticut -- so not the side that the flag is on, but the far side of the Connecticut delegation. In that aisle, there is a microphone.

Same in the aisle with Illinois on the far side of the Illinois delegation. Not the side with the flag. Oh, I'm sorry, Illinois, it's actually -- the microphone is next to the Illinois flag. So, next to the Illinois flag.

Next to New Mexico, in that aisle, there is a microphone.

And next to South Dakota, but the microphone is on the far side of the South Dakota affiliate aisle.

We're going to move to the roll call. I'm going to give Alabama, Alaska, and Arizona an opportunity to get to the mic. Delegates, we will need to know who is your delegate, who is your alternate delegate, who will be serving on the nominating committee, and when your state convention is planned for.

Do we have Alabama?

... we didn't give them much time. You could pull another door prize if you want, Bennett... if you want.

BENNETT PROWS: Door prize, geez, okay! We've got 50 bucks out here, and we're going to give that to... Christopher Rigby. Christopher Rigby, are you here? Not Eleanor Rigby. Christopher Rigby!

(Laughter.)

Not here. Let's try another name. Mallory Eggleston. Mallory, are you here?

(Cheering).

Mallory...?

She's here. I think we found her.

MARK RICCOBONO: Waaaaay down there... let's see, do we have Alabama?

ALABAMA REP: Good morning, President Riccobono and my NFB family! President Riccobono, first, I'd like to take this opportunity, something that we don't do often enough. I want to convey our sincere, heartfelt thank you to all that you bring to our affiliate. We know the last three years have been very challenging. But you have stepped up to the plate. You, Pam, and the board members.

To bring us back together in full force and doing what we are here to do. No matter the obstacles, we will make differences in our blind community. So we say thank you.

(Cheering) Alabama has 8 Jernigan scholarship winners with us today. We also have the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind director Dr. Massio with us. The director of the Freedom Center, Structured Discovery Freedom Center director, along with the students

We also want to take this time -- all of you know that our dear sweet friend Joy Harris has departed. She will definitely be missed, but her spirit lives on in Alabama and beyond.

(Cheering).

Our national convention affiliate convention will be held March 3rd-5th, 2023, in Birmingham, Alabama, at the UAB Hotel, and we do not have a delegate as of yet. Thank you, sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: You're serving as the delegate, right?

REP: Yes, I'm serving as the delegate and vice president Tamika Williams will serve as the alternate.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much.

Alaska.

All right, Alaska, we'll come back to you. How about Arizona?

ARIZONA REP: Good morning, President Riccobono, members of the board, and my Federation family. My name is Donald Porterfield, and the Arizona affiliate recognizes that we never dreamed in 2019, when we left Las Vegas, that it would be three years before we got together again. So President Riccobono, the Arizona affiliate stands behind you, Pam, and the rest of the board in everything you've done to lead us through these troubling three years. We sincerely appreciate your leadership.

Arizona has 29 bell ringers this year.

(Applause.)

We have 15 first-timers in our delegation. We're claiming two scholarship winners. We have Tasnim, who is winning a scholarship for the second time. And we're claiming Colin Wong, even though he's moved to Washington, we believe we helped lay the foundation that got him here.

(Applause.)

Also in our delegation, we have Kristin Mackie, who is the administrator for Arizona's rehabilitation services administration. We have Dr. Bryan Dulud, manager of services for the blind, visually impaired, and deaf, with us as well.

Our convention is September 1st-4th at the University Park Marriott in Tucson, Arizona. As of right now, we do not have a representative assigned. I am serving as the delegate, and will also serve on the nominating committee. And Abdala Shuli, who is a member of our state board, will serve as the alternate. Thank you, and thank you for bringing us here to New Orleans, President Riccobono.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Arizona.

(Bells ringing).

Arkansas, California, Colorado, please move to the microphone. Do we have Alaska?

ALASKA REP: I'm here. Greetings, everyone, I'm so happy to be here. So we have small numbers this year, but we're important, right?

(Crowd cheering).

All right, so, I will be -- I am the delegate, and Katie Lester is the alternate delegate. I will be on the nominating committee, and our convention is the first weekend in November, I believe that's the 3rd and 4th. Anything else I'm missing?

MARK RICCOBONO: Just welcome to the convention!

(Applause.)

Thank you, Alaska! Arkansas!

ARKANSAS REP: Hello, President Riccobono and the national board. I want to thank you for having us here. I am the delegate and nominating committee, and my alternate is Donovan Cavinger. Our convention is going to be March 31st-April 2, 2023, in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

And, I don't know, I can't remember!

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Arkansas!

(Applause.)

California...

(Loud cheering).

(Music playing: " California Love").

CALIFORNIA REP: California is here, sir!

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

It feels great to be here together in NOLA 2022. California is having a state convention, in person, San Diego, November 3rd through the 6th at the San Diego Courtyard Marriott Old Town. I'm happy to serve as the delegate. First vice president Rachel Greider will serve as the alternate. I will be on the nominating committee. We don't have a convention representative yet. We're very proud to have nearly 200 people registered in person or the virtual convention experience this year. We're going to have a California caucus tonight, 7:30 p.m., Studio 6. We're very proud of our 3 scholarship finalist this is year. Bhavya Shawn, Carla Scoggins, tenBroek fellow, and Ethan. Over the last year, California has done a lot. We've launched a Spanish language chapter at large in the state.

(Applause.)

Thank you to Carmen Varella and Liz Campos for leading the way, and the support of Veronica Hernandez and Juanita Herrera from the board. Shoutout to our 22 chapters throughout the state. They've made virtual possible throughout the pandemic and are shifting safely to in-person meetings. I've had the pleasure of serving on the special committee this year that President Riccobono appointed to investigate and make recommendations on how our organization can make a safe and inclusive space. The special committee completed its work this past year in 2021, in a final report released to the membership. I'd like to specifically thank our president, Mark Riccobono, and our first vice president, Pam Allen, for the work that they are doing with the board to implement the recommendations of the special committee.

(Applause.)

I personally know the heart, the commitment, and the passion that Pam and Mark have for all blind people. Mark, Pam, both of you have received unfair personal attacks and criticism as you have been working hard to improve our movement. Anyone in leadership knows that productive criticism is useful, but unproductive criticism is detrimental to the entire community.

(Applause.)

Yelling from the sidelines from the easy. Leading from the front lines is harder. Mark, Pam, I stand with you. I support your leadership. I'm excited to see where you're taking us. As long as this federation is fighting to ensure the rights of blind people to leave the life we want to live, California will be at your side and so will I. Let's keep building the Federation.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, California. Connecticut, Delaware, and District of Columbia, please move to the microphones.

Colorado...

(Applause.)

(Cheering and chanting).

COLORADO REP: Good morning, Mr. President.

Wait, a minute, Scott. Don't you realize we had an election?

SCOTT LABARRE: Well, what happened?

JESSICA: You didn't run.

SCOTT LABARRE: Ladies and gentlemen, may I present the new president of NFB of Colorado, Ms. Jessica Beecham class.

(Applause.)

JESSICA: Good morning, so happy to be with you today. The only thing -- stealing from my friend Scott LaBarre -- higher than the expectations that we hold for blind people is -- oh, I think I got that backward s.

SCOTT LABARRE: You did. The only thing higher than our purple mountain majesty is our... expectation and love for blind people! Our love and pride in our president, Mark Riccobono!

JESSICA: And vice president Pam Allen. We stand with you.

(Applause.)

We're so proud of our national scholarship winner, Robert Lamb, who is also a state scholarship winner along with Martin Besara Miranda and Dan Levinka.

SCOTT LABARRE: We are so proud of our Colorado Center for the Blind!

WHOO!

And we stand with you, Joy, you're our leader at the center, you're doing the best job possible, we stand with you now and always.

(Applause.)

JESSICA: We want to send a shoutout to listening at home, door prize queen, Diane Mc-George!

(Applause.)

And then we want to let you know a few important things. Oh! We have a World Series winning team? Is that right?

SCOTT LABARRE: No, no, Jessica. We're home of the Colorado Avalanche... winners of the 2022 Stanley Cup!

JESSICA: Oh, that's it. THAT sport! Basketball!

(Laughter.)

No!

So, we have our delegate for Colorado is going to be myself, Jessica Beecham. Our alternate delegate been Scott LaBarre.

SCOTT LABARRE: That's me!

JESSICA: I will serve on the nominating committee -- just in case we got confused, thank you for that Scott!

And our convention will be held October 27th-30th in Greely, Colorado, and if you want to see us before that, everyone is invited to our 6 dot dash on October 10.

I might not have mentioned Doris Glather, one of our state scholarship winners, so if I didn't, I'm mentioning you now, and if I did, I'm mentioning you twice.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Colorado.

BENNETT PROWS: How about a door prize for Queen of Door Prizes, Diane Mc-George? She's a great person, and since she's not here but at home listening to us, I think we're going to do a door prize for people who are virtually participating.

So this one is going to be a $100 gift certificate, and if you are listening to us and you hear your name called, you have 30 minutes to let us know you're there by sending an e-mail to prize@nfb.org. The winner of this prize is Tammy Freetag of Nebraska! Tammy, I hope you're there, and within 30 minutes, you do the prize@nfb.org.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Bennett. Connecticut?

CONNECTICUT REP: Good morning President Riccobono, first vice president Pam Allen, and the members of the great state of Louisiana. We have three Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners with us this year. We lost a great affiliate member and past president Jackie Billie this year. I am Marion Mellie, delegate and on the nominating committee. Our national convention this year will be the 4th, 5th, and 6th in Connecticut. We're pleased to have a live BELL Academy this year again, whoo, starting on August 8th. We also have participants in the National Federation at home BELL Academy. Mr. President, this is my report, and thank you all so much for what you've done for us over the past several years with COVID, and it's great to be back in person

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Connecticut.

Delaware!

(Applause.)

DELAWARE REP: Greeting, my fellow Federationists. It is Cat Botner from the teeny tiny state of Delaware. I will be serving as the delegate. Our board member, June Hunter-Hardy, will be serving as the alternate delegate. I will be serving on the nominating committee. Our state convention is October 21 and 22nd at the Quality Inn in Simorna, Delaware. We do not have a national rep assigned at this time.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Delaware. .

Florida, Georgia, and Hawaii, please move to the microphones. Thank you to the delegates for keeping things moving.

District of Columbia...

SHAWN CALLAWAY: Hello, my Federation family. As my dear friend Jeannie Massay would always love to say. I'm excited for this convention and more excited for you to come to the Washington Seminar, hopefully, where we'll be serving you Krispy Kreme donuts as well. We have a youth transition representative from the department of rehabilitation. I will serve as the delegate. Mr. Tawan Farmer will be the alternate. Our convention will be held October 13th-16th. Thank you, sir

MARK RICCOBONO: That was Shawn Callaway, by the way.

SHAWN CALLAWAY: Oh, yeah, my name is Shawn Callaway. Thank you all.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Florida.

(Applause.)

FLORIDA REP: Good morning, fellow Federationists!!!

(Applause.)

President Riccobono, it is wonderful to see you and the national board. Thank you for all you do. We love every single person in this room. Florida is much appreciated.

President Riccobono, I, Paul Martinez, will be serving as the delegate, and your alternate will be second vice president Camille Tate, mwah.

(Laughter.)

Our convention is? -- is in Jacksonville, Florida --

(Cheering).

That's their cheer in Jacksonville.

(Laughter.)

Where you will also be enjoying some Krispy Kreme donuts, I guess they're very popular these days, I shouldn't eat anymore, my pants don't fit. But we'll be doing it October 7th through 9th. We welcome each of you. I want to shout out two Kenneth Jernigan winners and a national scholarship winner. Congratulations to all of you. Congratulations to all of our first timers, to the state board of Florida, thank you for all your help. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And I have to do this, because it was done when we did it virtually, and I thank president Denise Vacama giving a shoutout to my daughter, I have to continue it. I want to shout out my wife Miranda Kilby. I love you. Thank you for staying home. The baby will not be able to handle this. But to Isabella, next year, you're coming and meeting the rest of your family! Thank you

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Florida.

Georgia...

(Cheering).

GEORGIA REP: Greetings President Riccobono, national board of directors, Federation family, and a special shoutout to our virtual Federation family and friends who are at home.

I am Dorothy Griffin, affiliate president.

(Cheering).

Of the great peach state of Georgia.

I am serving as the delegate. Our alternate delegate is our first vice president, Katie Pinkney.

And I will be serving on the nominating committee.

Our 2022 state convention will be October 7, 8th, and 9th, at the beautiful downtown Sheraton Atlanta hotel! We have 7 Kenneth Jernigan winners in attendance.

(Cheering).

We have, as of yesterday, 76 registered in person, and we made it in the top 10!

(Cheering).

All right! And 25 virtual registration for our convention.

And we are excited to be here. And as always, you already know, we are feeling peachy keen.

(Cheering).

Let's go build the Federation. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Georgia!

Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa, please move to the microphones. Hawaii...

HAWAII REP: Aloha from the small but mighty state of Hawaii. Fellow Federationists, President Riccobono, and board, we are pleased to be here. My name is Katie Klein, second vice president of Hawaii. I will be the delegate. Our alternate delegate is Donald Sakamoto. I will be the nominating committee representative. We have four first timers!

(Cheering).

We also have two long-time honored guests. Our past president Monty Fife is with us, and the 57th year of in-person conventions, as well as virtual, Mr. James Gashel. They are with us this year.

(Applause.)

At this time, our state convention will be in May of 2023. We do not have a location. Dates and location to be announced. Mahalo, President Riccobono, that's my report. Aloha.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, and send my love to Virgil. Thank you, Hawaii.

Idaho...

IDAHO: Yes, this is Dana Art, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.

(Cheering).

Pleased to be here, thank you! All right.

We are proud to have three first timers at this convention, two of whom are Jernigan scholarship winners. We're also pleased to have probably the longest convention attendee that is attending now her 61st consecutive convention.

(Applause.)

This is Jan Gaywith, and although she moved to Kentucky, she's a lifetime member of our Idaho chapter. So, Jan, we still claim you, of course.

(Laughter.)

But we're just pleased to say -- and she's celebrated her 90th birthday in June.

(Applause.)

Getting on with other things that I've been asked to do, quickly, I will be the delegate and I will serve on the nominating committee. Susan Bradley, our state secretary, will serve as alternate delegate. Our convention will be April 20th-22nd at the Red Lion Downtowner in Boise. And we don't yet have a representative, of course. I don't believe there's anything else -- oh, I know. We're doing a BELL and Beyond Camp. It's going to be in northern Idaho, it's an actual camp, so it's going to be residential this year, and it's going to be really exciting. Because we haven't gotten together for a BELL program since 2019.

Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Idaho. Illinois.

(Applause.)

ILLINOIS REP: Yes! Good morning, my Federation family!

(Applause.)

I am Marilyn Greene, the proud state president of the state of Illinois, where accessible vote by mail is real due to the advocacy of our organization!!!

(Applause.)

First, I want to say, President Riccobono and Pam Allen, thank you for these last three years of your unwavering leadership, to new state presidents like myself, it is an honor to serve with you in our movement.

I will serve as the delegate, first vice president, Denise Avant will serve as our alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our state convention is October 28th-30th. We are excited to have a national scholarship finalist from Illinois, Ms. Teresa Fabre!

(Applause.)

Thank you sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Illinois.

Indiana...

INDIANA REP: Good morning, Federation family. First of all, I'd like to offer a heartfelt congratulations and thanks to Pam Allen of the Louisiana affiliate and all of those at the national office, President Riccobono, and at the core of our family, for making this an absolutely amazing convention. Thank you all.

(Applause.)

I also want to give a shoutout to our scholarship winner this year, Mr. Michael Hardin.

(Applause.)

We're so excited about Michael. So I will be serving as the delegate and on the nominating committee. Our first vice president, Ron Brown, will be serving as the alternate delegate. My friend and mentor and right hand man! Thank you, Ron!

(Cheering).

(Laughter.)

Our convention will be held October 7, 8, and 9th. We will be virtual again this year. So I hope to see many of our extended family there.

We do not yet have a national representative. And I think that's all we have.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Diane.

(Applause.)

Thank you, Indiana.

Will Kansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana please move to the microphones? Remind er to our delegates, we have a lot of new delegates, so some people might not know your voice, so you should give your name as well.

So, Iowa!

(Applause.)

IOWA REP: Good morning, Federation family! From the great state of Iowa, where we still have popcorn, scissors, and a few caps for sale...

(Laughter.)

All right, my name is Scott Van Gorp, I am the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa. Sorry, working out some logistics here... all right. Thank you, President Riccobono, Pam Allen, and the board for these last three years of leadership. Iowa stands with you.

We have three Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners this year. We also have in attendance participants in the LEAP Program from the Iowa Department for the Blind. Cheering

There's the LEAP crew. Thank you.

I will be serving as delegate. Our first vice president Cindy Ray will be the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our state convention, in the spirit of Ted Hart, Jim Omvig, and others, will be at the Des Moines hotel the 9th and 10th in person with virtual elements. We are cordially requesting a national representative of Terri Rupp, or Everette Bacon, or Pam Allen if she'd like to come too.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Iowa. Kansas!

KANSAS REP: Greetings, Federation family, from the Sunflower State. Greetings, President Riccobono, first vice president Pam Allen, board of directors, thank you for your thoughtful and compassionate leadership during these uncertain times of change.

I am very proud to announce that the governor of the great state of Kansas signed our parents' rights bill into law.

(Cheering and applause).

On June 8th. I also want to send congratulations to a member of the 2022 scholarship class from our state, Emily Shlenker.

(Applause.)

I will serve as delegate. Emily Shlenker will serve as alternate delegate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our convention will be September 3rd-6 thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Kentucky!

JANE: Hello, I'm Jane, president of Kentucky, and actually it's my first time in person being the president so that's pretty cool. Yay!

When I think about stuff over this past year, what comes to mind is the young people in our state. And the work that's being done through those young people, I know that Todd Stephens has worked really hard to build our NEWSLINE, and he actually got all of the students from the Kentucky School for the Blind middle and high school signed up, but also taught them how to use it to do their school work. So that was pretty impressive. Our youngest state board member graduated from college and got her first job, Danielle! And my very own daughter, Taryn, just graduated from LCB.

(Applause.)

And we've had two young people with us, Jacob and Amelia, over the past several years. Jessica is borrowing them this summer, and she WILL be returning them, but that's okay, because she brought them to convention and it's Amelia's first convention. So that's also amazing. We are having an in-person BELL the last week of July in Louisville. And a lot of returning students who have waited patiently for us to be back in person, and also texted me a lot.

So our convention will be held July -- sorry, I'm reading -- our convention will be held the last weekend of October. So the weekend right before Halloween, so we're going to do a little "facing your fears" at convention. Should be fun. I will serve as the delegate, and Kathy Jackson as the alternate delegate. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Kentucky.

You know, we have a lot of new presidents, I don't know if we should call them "pandemic presidents" or not.

(Groans in the crowd).

MARK RICCOBONO: That's also a lot of pandemic babies around this convention. It's been great to meet the kiddos. I'm not making a comparison between the pandemic presidents and pandemic babies, mind you!

(Laughter.)

Maryland, Maine, and Mississippi move to the microphones. Louisiana!

(Cheering).

PAM ALLEN: Hello, President Riccobono and my Federation family!

(Applause.)

It is so great to be together with you again in New Orleans!

I am Pam Allen, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana, and I want to thank our incredible affiliate and our LCB team for all of their love and hospitality and hard work this week as we come back together again.

(Cheering and applause).

Thank you, everyone, for your kind words and your support. We are able to do the work that we do because of each one of you in this room and everyone who is listening. Thank you so much.

I am proud to say that we have our staff and students from the Louisiana Center for the Blind in our delegation.

(Cheering and applause).

We are also honored to have Joanne Wilson, LCB founder and president emeritus of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana.

(Applause.)

Because of Joanne's dream and the dream of so many thousands of blind people are living the lives they want, and our alumni are active all over this convention and all over the Federation, making a difference.

I also want to recognize in our delegation Dr. Edward Bell, the director of our professional development and research institute on blindness, and the dedicated staff and students of our Institute on Blindness.

(Applause.)

I want to welcome our state director of blind services, Kevin Monk, and other staff of the Louisiana rehabilitation services. I also want to acknowledge our state scholarship winner Lindsey Adar and national scholarship winner Justin Champagne, as well as acknowledging our current student Bhavya Shaw, and Colin Wong, national scholarship winners.

(Applause.)

We celebrate Marcus Russel and Mary Washington Cobb, and we just had our first in-person BELL Academy in June with 22 in-person participants and two in our in-home edition. It was so great. And you heard from Narjis earlier today. I want to extend a special greeting to everyone at their first convention and thank everyone who helped out with our Rookie Roundup on Tuesday night. Please make sure to stop by if you have not received your first-time ribbon, our Louisiana flag. We welcome you and we're so glad that you're here. I will serve as the nominating committee, on the nominating committee as our delegate. Triva Olivero is our first vice president and will serve as our alternate delegate. Our state convention will be April 14th through 16th in Baton Rouge at the Crown Plaza, and also, don't forget to come tonight to Galleries 1 Through 3 to the welcome party, you heard a little taste of that earlier today

(Applause.)

So please come tonight, we can't wait to see you. Thank you, President Riccobono.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Louisiana, and thank you for that great opening ceremony. I've been hungry up here ever since.

(Laughter.)

I got a text saying "is chef Harriet really cooking on the stage?" Yup, yup. You can smell it up here! So, still hungry. Still hungry.

How about Maine?

(Applause.)

MAINE REP: Good morning Mr. President, and board and Federation. We in Maine stand by you as well as Pam Allen. My name is Leon Proctor of the National Federation of the Blind of Maine. I'm the delegate. Mark Tardiff is the second delegate and will be on the nominating committee. Our state convention is September 24th at the adaptive outdoor education center. I'm also proud to say we have seven first timers, as well as two Jernigan scholarship winners, Randy Belavant and Sheila Strum. We do not have a representative, but we are requesting Shawn Callaway. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Maine.

Maryland?

(Loud cheering).

RONZA OTHMAN: Greetings from the great state of Maryland!!!

(Applause.)

We were the host of the 2021 national convention! We're the land of crab and contests!

Isn't the Louisiana affiliate doing an amazing job hosting this convention?

(Applause.)

I am Ronza Othman, my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I have the privilege of serving as president of this wonderful Maryland affiliate. We are the home of the headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind!

(Cheering).

Where we have unparalleled staff.

We are the home of our remarkable president, Mark Riccobono.

(Cheering).

Home of our distinguished immediate past president, Dr. Marc Maurer.

(Applause.)

Home of three lovely and wonderful first ladies, Melissa Riccobono, Patricia Mauer, and Mary Ellen Jernigan!

(Applause.)

We are the home of resolutions queen Sharon Manecki!

(Applause.)

We have with us today the incoming president of blind industries and services of Maryland, who is a past president of the National Federation of the Blind, Dr. Michael Gauss.

(Applause.)

We have many of the staff and students from BISM's core and sale programs. And many of the associates from BISM.

We also have with us 58 first-time convention attendees.

We have 13 members of the Maryland Narrowing the Gap program.

(Cheering).

Which is the brainchild of President Riccobono, and is a partnership between the NFB, the NFB of Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education, and Louisiana Tech University!

(Applause.)

The goal is to train and certify teachers of blind students to address the TBS teacher shortage in Maryland.

We have with us Teacher of Tomorrow Martha Hazen. We have two national scholarship finalists, Sean Abraham and Caitlin Sipl.

We are home of the first NFB BELL Academy, and we will hold in-person Baltimore BELL July 25th through August 5th, as well as participate in in-home edition.

This year, we were able to get a bill passed in the Maryland state legislature that requires all Maryland school districts to procure accessible learning platforms!

(Cheering and applause).

I was honored to serve on the NFB special committee last year, and it was the most difficult and most important task of my life, because I am a survivor, and I understand the stakes. I'm so grateful to those who have shared their experiences, and I'm deeply sorry for your pain. I hope that the work and the process improvements that we have made organizationally will help on your journey of healing, for that of survivors, and for the organization as a whole.

As we work toward healing and following our investigation, I want to share that I am confident that President Mark Riccobono and first vice president Pam Allen are the best people to lead our organization into the future.

(Cheering and applause).

And to help us heal.

I and the Maryland affiliate are grateful for your vulnerability, your leadership, your tremendous hard work, and your unwavering commitment to meeting the moment and moving us forward with authenticity, grace, and accountability.

Mr. President, I am the delegate. Debbie Brown, our first vice president, will be the alternate delegate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our convention is November 11th-13th, 2022, at the Sheraton Baltimore North in Towson, Maryland. We do not yet have a national representative. Thank you so much.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Maryland.

Mississippi...

Oh, we can do Massachusetts, sure!

(Laughter.)

Let's do Massachusetts, why not.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MASSACUSETTS REP: Thank you, President Riccobono. I know the first thing everyone says when they hear my voice is "you don't sound like you're from Massachusetts". So I want to say that I am from Tennessee, and I now live in Massachusetts.

(Laughter.)

I'm the president of NFB Massachusetts. We do have a scholarship finalist, Stephanie Valdez.

(Applause.)

She is also, happens to be the president of our brand-new parents division that we just established this year.

So she's being a young mother as well as a wonderful student.

We also have a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner, and that's Shirley Doris, a new member in her first convention with us.

(Applause.)

Our convention will be March 2nd-4th, 2023, at the Embassy Suites Logan Airport location in Boston, and we want all y'all to come -- I still say "all y'all", we want all y'all to come.

(Laughter.)

We're so excited to be here. We have many members that have not been to a convention since the '90s that came this time, and many new ones. I want to thank Jessica Beecham, Marci Carpenter, and President Riccobono for being such good mentors helping me lead in Massachusetts, and our new motto in Massachusetts is "step up and shine", and that's what we want to see from everyone. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: And you're serving as the delegate and the nominating committee?

REP: Yes, sir, and Colin Gallagher is our second vice president.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, thank you Massachusetts.

(Applause.)

Will Minnesota, Mississippi, and Missouri please move to the microphones?

Michigan is already at the microphone. I'm calling the folks that are going to be next.

We should just skip Michigan, don't you think?

They're a little ornery over there.

? (Playful jeering)

Okay, we'll go to Michigan. It was kind of fun to find out that Mississippi came before Michigan!

(Laughter.)

Anyway, we switched places.

I am Michael Powell, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan!

When we got our list of people registered for the convention, pre-registration, we had 22 people pre registered, 14 virtuals, and I know since that time, we have more people who have registered.

I will be the delegate, and I will serve on the nominating committee. Sabrina Simmons is our alternate delegate. Our state convention will be at the Plaza Grand Rapids Hotel the weekend of November 4, 5th, and 6th, and we do not yet have a representative assigned, sir. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Michigan!

Minnesota...

MINNESOTA REP: Good morning, Federation family. This is Steve Jacobson, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota. The land of 10,000 lakes, which we're proud of. But we're even more proud of being the home of our training center, Blindness Learning and New Dimensions, Blind Incorporated. We have probably 30 or so from Blind Incorporated here with us, and we are proud of all of them. We also have a state scholarship winner with us, Abi Castle. We have another state scholarship winner that I know is out there in virtual land. So we're proud of both of those people as well.

I did want to mention, since it moved a little bit on on the agenda from the original position, that, please attend the Blind Incorporated event tonight at 7:00 p.m. in Gallery 6.

Our convention is November 4, 5, and 6th in Bloomington, Minnesota, at the Mall of America Hilton. We don't have a national rep yet. I will be the delegate. Ryan Strunk is the alternate. And, oh, gosh, there's one more thing -- I'll serve as the nomination committee.

MARK RICCOBONO: There you go!

Thank you, Minnesota.

(Applause.)

Mississippi!

(Applause.)

MISSISSIPPI REP: Good morning, everyone, I'm Candace Chapman, newly elected president of the Mississippi affiliate. I am happy to let you know in our delegation we have 12 first timers in person and virtually. I am the delegate. Our first vice president Sharon Perry is the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our state convention is tentatively scheduled for March 24th Through 26 in Tupalo, Mississippi. We do not yet have a hotel. I think that's everything.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Mississippi.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Will Montana, Nebraska, and Nevada please move to the microphones? Missouri!

(Cheering).

MISSOURI REP: Good morning, Mr. President. I'm Sheila Wright, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri, and I bring greetings from all of our members. I'd like to give a shout-out to our members who were not able to travel with us to the convention, especially Willa Patterson, who would have been at her 48th convention this year if there was not a little positive sign... on her test.

So, we are the Show-Me state.

(Cheering (.

And we're proud to announce today that our governor signed the BRIGHT Act on June 30th. I believe we're the first state that has passed the model BRIGHT Act, and want to say that we're really excited about this.

(Cheering and applause).

I am the delegate, Amy Wilson is our alternate delegate, I will serve on the nominating committee. Our state convention is scheduled for April 13th-16th in St. Louis, Missouri. That's my report.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Missouri.

(Applause.)

Montana!

MONTANA REP: Good morning, greetings, fellow Federationists, from Big Sky Country. My name is Jim Marks. I serve as the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Montana. I want to take just a moment to acknowledge that we have a celebration in our delegation, Ted Robins is attending his 40th convention this year.

(Applause.)

And Ted tells me that there were a lot of years where he was the only guy in the room. And it's wonderful to have, you know, people doing their part so that we can build a better future.

I will serve as the delegate. Travis Moses will serve as the alternate delegate. I'll serve on the nominating committee, and our convention has not been set yet. It will be virtual, and it will happen in September.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Montana!

(Applause.)

Nebraska.

NEBRASKA REP: Good morning, Federation family! This is Jamie Ritchie from Nebraska.

(Applause.)

Where we have some old-timers...

(Laughter.)

Some first-timers... some some-timers, and hopefully they'll become some every-timers.

We also have in our delegation the executive director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, as well as a third of the staff of the agency, three of our five board members for the board of commissioners, and the students, parents, and staff of the Work and Gain Experience summer program.

(Applause.)

We will have our state's convention next March 23rd-26th at the Lincoln Marriott Corn Husker in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska, and I was just saying to Terri behind me that she should our representative! A little hint there.

I am serving as the delegate. Our first vice president, Christine Boone, is the alternate delegate. And I'm serving on the nominating committee. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Nebraska.

Will New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York please move to the microphone.

Nevada.

(Applause.)

NEVADA REP: Good morning, Federation family!

Wow, has it really been 3 years when we were together in Las Vegas? Seems like a lifetime ago!

I will serve as the delegate. Mark Tatter, Nevada's first vice president, will serve as the alternate. We have, if I count correctly, 8 first timers!

We also have one Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner. President Riccobono, my colleagues on the national board, Pam, thank you, it's been my honor to serve. I'm not resigning. That's not a speech.

(Laughter.)

To the members of the National Federation of the Blind, thank you for all of your support and standing behind President Riccobono, Pam, and the rest of the board as we got through the last three years.

I think that's it. I feel like I'm missing something, but I think that's it, thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Nevada!

(Applause.)

New Hampshire....

NH REP: Hi, my name is Deanna O'Brien, New Hampshire state president. This is my first convention, and it is an awesome experience!

(Cheering and applause).

Thank you so much.

I am the delegate and I will attend the nominating committee. My alternate delegate is Carolyn Corrigan, my secretary. Among the delegation we have the service coordinator for the services for the visually impaired, Dan Frey, I have scholarship winner Abbie Duffy.

(Applause.)

Our next convention is September 24, 2022. It is virtual from 9:00 to 5:00. We do not have a national representative as of yet. Thank you very much.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, New Hampshire.

(Applause.)

New Jersey... TERRI RUPP: This is Terri Rupp again, I did forget something, our state convention will be November 19th and 20, just by Las Vegas and the Hoover Dam, come join us!

NEW JERSEY REP: Greetings, now this is New Jersey, this is Lisa Melendez, and this is my first presidential report in person, thank you. I will be the delegate, Ann Marie Cook, the treasurer will be the alternate delegate, and I'd like to thank all the chapters and divisions who contributed to our donations for convention funds. I'd also like to thank the northern chapter for the door prize. We're having an in-person BELL Academy this year, yay, it's going to be July 18th for two weeks. I'm really proud to announce that we have two scholarship winners who are graduating high school, in Natasha Ishaq and Renae Hemmings. We also have a New Jersey first time winner, Lauren Altman.

Hold on, I'm going through my list. And I just want to say that New Jersey held a hybrid caucus meeting because we wanted to invite our peers back in Jersey to join us. Our 46th annual state convention will be held Thursday, November 10th, through Sunday November 13th at the Delta Woodbridge in Island, New Jersey, and we have invited our 2020 and 2021 National reps to join us because we want them to experience the New Jersey convention on steroids!

(Applause.)

I want to take a minute to express how difficult it has been for the state of New Jersey in losing Joseph Ruffalo, but his legacy is for us to continue to stay strong and do the work of the affiliate and the movement. I would like to thank our Federation family for their support during his illness and finally his death.

I do have a message that I'd like to give from the sister and his family.

So, Jane, his sister, serves on the National Senior Board, and she serves as president for the senior and technology divisions. The Ruffalo and Degashein family would like to thank all of you for your thoughts and prayers for our dearly departed brother, Joseph Ruffalo. His service was attended by over 600 attendees and 100 via Zoom. They want to thank the national office for attending in person, particularly president Riccobono for his stirring remarks at the funeral. Joe's final resting place will be an interment next summer with full military glories at the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC.

(Cheering and applause).

Details will be shared shortly via our listservs.

And that, President Riccobono, is my first in-person NFB of New Jersey affiliate president report.

(Cheering and applause).

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, New Jersey.

New Mexico...

(Cheering).

NEW MEXICO REP: Greetings, President Riccobono, Federation family. It is great to be here today in person. We missed it the last couple of years. And now we are here gathered, having a great time.

Thanks to the leadership of President Riccobono, Pam Allen, and the rest of the board.

We have 21 people present at our state convention from New Mexico. We also have quite a few from -- who are on the virtual... they're listening to us virtually. I want to thank them.

I am Adelmo Vigil, I will be our delegate. Our first vice president will be our alternate delegate, and I will serve on the nominating committee. We have a convention coming up here, August 25th-28th, and we do not have a national rep assigned. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, New Mexico.

(Applause.)

Will North Carolina, North Dakota, and Ohio move to the microphones?

New York!

(Cheering).

NEW YORK REP: Greetings, President Riccobono, national board, Federation family, friends, supporters, everybody, it's great to be back together. We've really shown the Federation spirit by the organization not just surviving, but growing, becoming stronger during the time when we couldn't do things the way we normally do. But we thank you for your leadership.

I'm Mike Robinson, president of the National Federation of the Blind of New York.

(Cheering).

In New York, in the past year, we've had our blind parents Right to Parent Act signed to law by the governor.

(Cheering).

And the NEWSLINE funding bill has also passed the legislature, and is on its way to the governor to be signed.

A lot of successes.

I will be the delegate. Chancy Fleet will serve as alternate delegate, she's our vice president, and I'll be on the nominating committee. Our convention will be October 21st-23rd in Buffalo, New York. We currently do not have a national representative assigned.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, New York.

(Applause.)

North Carolina.

(Cheering).

NORTH CAROLINA REP: Good morning, everybody, from North Carolina! We're very proud to be here for several reasons. One, we're back together as a state, too, for the first time! So thank you, Pam, for putting this convention together in New Orleans. We've learned a lot while we've been here.

My name is Sharon Winnington. I'm the president. I'll be serving as the delegate. And I'll also be on the nominating committee.

We have two Jernigan scholarships. So we're very proud of both Ryan and Elizabeth for that, and we hope to have many, many more new people next year.

Our second vice president is Marlon Stover, and he will be our alternate delegate.

(Applause.)

Our convention is August 25th-28th, and that will be in Durham, North Carolina, at the Sheraton Imperial Airport Hotel. We do not have a representative assigned at this time. And that's it.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, North Carolina.

(Applause.)

North Dakota...

NORTH DAKOTA REP: Thank you, President Riccobono, and Federation family. My name is Jessie Sherik, my first in-person convention as president. We're happy to celebrate Casey Martin, our national scholarship finalist.

(Applause.)

North Dakota will be holding an in-person convention in Grand Forks, North Dakota, November 4th and 5th.

I will be serving as the delegate. Past scholarship recipient James Yessel will be alternate delegate, and I'll serve on the nominating committee. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, North Dakota.

(Applause.)

Oklahoma, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, please move to the microphones. Ohio...

(Cheering).

OHIO REP: Good morning! President Riccobono, members of the National Federation of the Blind, my fellow Federationists. I love you. I truly am dedicated to everything that we can do to build the National Federation of the Blind. It is so exciting to be back in person again this year. I'm in love with this convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, you have done us a fairly great time!

I'm looking forward to the rest of the convention.

Mr. President, I'm happy to report that our parental rights bill has been voted out of the House in Ohio, it's been voted through the Senate. They're working together to get the language in tune so that we can send it to the governor's office and get it into law this year. That is our hope for our parental rights bill. Hard work on behalf of our members virtually here and across the state of Ohio who worked diligently to make it happen.

We have 15 first timers at this convention.

(Applause.)

We have the last two national scholarship winners, one from the student division, both of them from the student division. Kinshuk and Emily, they're both here at this convention.

(Applause.)

Mr. President, I will serve as delegate, and also on the nominating committee. Vice president Suzanne Turner is the alternate delegate. Our convention will be in person, November 4th, 5th, and 6th, in Independence, Ohio, which is a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. We have not yet been assigned a national rep at this time. And we have not only an in-person convention but also BELL Academy this year. Sir, that is my report

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Ohio. Oklahoma!

(Applause.)

OKLAHOMA REP: Good morning, President Riccobono. Members of the board, my Federation family. I am Audrey T Fornham, acting president of the National Federation of the Blind of Oklahoma. I am excited to tell you that we have one first timer with us, and we are claiming scholarship winner Sarah Menefee, I know she's from Texas, but she's going to school in Oklahoma, so we're going to claim her.

(Applause.)

I will serve as the delegate. Our treasurer, Glenda Fornham, will be the alternate. I will be on the nominating committee. We'll have a virtual convention October 14th through 16th and we have not been assigned a representative.

I would also... (voice breaking)... like to recognize and acknowledge the loss of our affiliate president Jeannie Massay, and I miss her very much, but I know she's been here with us, because I keep hearing her laughing at me in my head.

So, we miss you, Jeannie, and we love you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Oklahoma.

I have my purple Mardi Gras beads on for Jeannie Massay today.

Oregon.

(Applause.)

OREGON REP: Good morning, everyone, Oregon is in the house today!

(Applause.)

My name is it Carla McQuillan, I'm the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon, and will serve as our delegate and on the nominating committee. Our alternate delegate is Kristin Jokhams. We also have with us one Jernigan fund scholarship winner and national scholarship winner Jenn Doran. Our convention will be October 28th through 30th. At the Regency Hotel in Medford, Oregon, and we do not yet have a national representative assigned.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Oregon. Will Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, and South Carolina please move to the microphones. Pennsylvania...

(Applause.)

PA REP: Good morning, Federation family. My name is Lynn Heits, and I'm excited to serve as the president of National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has several things to celebrate this year. First of all, for 17 years, Jim has served as our president and he's in our delegation with us today. We also want to thank Carla McQuillan for her many years of service with Kids Camp, and she has chosen Harriet from Pennsylvania to serve as next year's director of Kids Camp.

(Applause.)

We want to thank Carlton Walker, who has served for 7 years as the president of National Organization of Parents of Blind Children, and celebrate the election of Emily, president of the parents' division of Pennsylvania, to the board of NOPBC.

(Applause.)

We have 67 in-person individuals registered for this convention, and untold numbers on Zoom.

We have 23 first-timers at this convention.

(Applause.)

We also want to celebrate the national scholarship winner Julia Murray.

(Applause.)

I will serve as the delegate and on the nominating committee. Joe Drenth is our alternate delegate. Our state convention will be held November 10th through November 13th at the Sheraton Station Square in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And we currently do not have a national rep. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Pennsylvania.

Puerto Rico...

PUERTO RICO REP: Buenos dias, companeros, greetings to fellow Federationists, and I'm the acting president of Puerto Rico since May. I'm here with Guillermo Perez, acting vice president, as well. We're the delegate and alternate delegate, respectively. I'm an LCB graduate, woo-hoo!

(Applause.)

Yay! I feel like I'm part of both Puerto Rico -- I mean, all of Puerto Rico, Louisiana, and Massachusetts, because I also studied in Boston!

So thank you, President Riccobono, and Pam Allen, and all of the board and staff for your support during this time of transition. And also, I wanted to thank everyone here, because you've been so kind with both me and our vice president, and you've given us so much information, hope, and fun. We really appreciate our Federation family

We do not have a date for convention yet, but once we do, we invite you all to have fun in Puerto Rico and learn a ton with us. We'll promise to teach you all salsa and reggaeton and all that good stuff, okay?

(Cheering).

That's it, and I'll be on the nominating committee, and thanks!

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Puerto Rico!

Rhode Island.

RHODE ISLAND REP: Good morning, Mr. President, this is Grace Byers, president of National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island. I will be serving in the nominating committee. I am the delegate. Christopher Bove will be the alternate.

Our convention is September 17th at the Radisson Hotel in Warwick. We do not have a representative assigned to us yet. I also wanted to let you know, we do have one Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner this year, and we have our 2020 scholarship winner with us as well, Christopher Bove.

And I'm happy to say that at the end of June, our governor signed into law legislation that will allow us to vote by mail accessibly and be able to return the ballots accessibly!

(Applause.)

So we're very excited about that.

We love this convention. Thank you all so much for putting it together. We're so happy to be here in person. I also wanted to give a shout out, I know there are some Rhode Islanders listening in, so I'm glad, sorry you guys aren't here, hope you enjoy the convention, and that's my report. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Rhode Island. We will now move to South Carolina.

(Applause.)

SOUTH CAROLINA REP: Hello, my Federation family from the Palmetto State. I, Jennifer Bezer, affiliate president, will serve on the nominating committee and as delegate. Our treasurer is alternate delegate. We are for the first time in a long time the first in SUN. In May, we also passed legislation to eliminate subminimum wage in South Carolina!!!!

(Cheering and applause).

I'd like to also welcome from the South Carolina Commission for the Blind, commissioner Arlene Graham and staff. Thank you all, have a great convention!

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, South Carolina.

South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA REP: Good morning, everyone. I'm from -- our president couldn't be here today. He had a stroke a couple months ago. He's on the mend, though. He hopes to be here next year. I'm Ismael Comazo, I'm the delegate, my first time.

(Applause.)

I'm also on the nominating committee. And our state convention is April 23rd in Rapid City, South Dakota. Thank you

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, South Dakota.

(Applause.)

Tennessee...

TENNESSEE: James Borough from Nashville, Tennessee in the Federation house!

(Applause.)

I would say good morning, but it's afternoon. And I do also want to say, since Scott LaBarre is no longer president, we might finish on time, because he is a little bit long winded

(Laughter.)

I want to say, there was another Independence Day. It was not July 4th this year. It was also July 1st. That is the day when sub minimum wages are now illegal in Tennessee!

(Cheering and applause).

I also want to say we've got an accessible prescription labels bill passed, so we got double trouble going on in Tennessee!

(Applause.)

I want to say congratulations to Selene Monjarez from Memphis, give her a hand. I want to request Jessica as our national rep. We have our convention on the 22nd and 23rd in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I'll be on the nominating committee. I'll be our delegate -- you know, it's been like 4 years since I've done this!

And also, our second delegate will be Dr. Deborah Carter, she is our first vice president. Thank you, Mr. Riccobono.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Tennessee.

Will Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington please move to the microphones? Texas!

(Cheering and applause).

TEXAS REP: Good morning, fellow Federationists. Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again, but I'm here to tell you that's not true. We're home, we're proud, and we're so glad to be together again in NOLA in 2022.

And we want to invite you to the home of the 2023 convention, Houston, Texas!

(Cheering and applause).

I'm proud to say that sitting in our delegation this week is Emily Coleman, the superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind.

(Applause.)

We also have a Teacher of Tomorrow, Dori Sentatori, and another BVI instructor Wilson. We have four Jernigan scholarship winners in Texas, two current scholarship finalists, Daniel Martinez --

(Applause.)

-- who is a tenBroek fellow, and Sarah Menefee.

We also have two -- a 2020 and 2021 scholarship winner in our delegation. We have seven mentoring program participants sitting in the delegation this week. And I tell you what -- we don't have a center in Texas, but we have the mightiest little group of staff members and volunteers who work with our mentoring program in the country!

So I want to thank all of them for being here and helping all our mentoring program participants do what they need to do this week to enjoy this convention.

Mr. President, I am serving as the delegate. My first vice president, Raul Gallegos, will serve as the alternate delegate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our convention is scheduled for the weekend of November 11th through 13th at the Double Tree Hobby Airport in Houston, Texas. And we invite everyone to come. We do not yet have a national representative assigned, but we'll take any of the great national reps you have that you want to send to us. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Texas.

Utah.

EVERETTE BACON: Good afternoon, fellow Federationists, hello, President Riccobono, I am Everette Bacon, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Utah, where our mountains are way more majestic than Colorado's, and our snow is much more powdery!

(Laughter and cheering).

It's a great time to be here this day. I know my friend Jeannie Massay is kind of mischievously smiling down at me because I have a limp, and I know how many conventions she came with a limp and I know she's getting back at me a little bit. I miss her and wish she were here with us. I'm so proud to serve on the national board with great mentors such as Pam Allen, Mark Riccobono, Norma Crosby, and Shawn Callaway, and so on and so on. They're the greatest people I've had the pleasure to know and I'm so proud to be a part of them

Utah has two former scholarship winners from 2021, the reunion scholarship class, Tina and Megan here. We're really excited about them.

(Applause.)

We have two first-timers here today from Utah, Casey Quinn, our guide dog user group leader, and Lindsey, our scholarship group leader.

We also have Utah Services for the Blind here today. That's pretty awesome. And I want to give a special shoutout to Carl Smith, who is here at his 45th national convention!

(Applause.)

We do not yet have a location set up for our convention in 2023. It will be in the month of April. I will serve as the delegate. Mark Turley will serve as the alternate delegate. And I will serve on the nominating committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Utah.

(Applause.)

Vermont.

VERMONT REP: Good afternoon, Mr. President and fellow Federationists. Vermont has had a great year. I have one new member who is a first-timer, but he's also here with Louisiana training to be a mobility instructor, Mark Companion.

(Applause.)

We were also lucky enough to have a sponsor for our convention this year, which made it possible for us to give a donation to Vermont Adaptive Sports in honor of Eric -- I'm probably going to butcher the name -- Wayhenmayer. Because he was the commencement speaker for the University of Vermont. As his son is a student there. And we wanted to be able to give a donation in his honor so that we could engorge blind and disabled youth to participate in their winter sports program.

We are going to have our convention in May. Right now we're considering May 5th and 6th of 2023, the location will be determined, but it will be in-person with a virtual component.

I am the delegate. My first vice president Justin Salisbury is my alternate. And I will serve on the nomination committee.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Vermont. Will West Virginia and Wisconsin please move to the microphones. Virginia...

(Cheering).

TRACY SOFORENKO: Good afternoon, fellow Federationists! I am Tracy Soforenko, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, and in Virginia we want to mention that we recognize that this has been a year, or a period of time where we haven't been together and we are excited for the phenomenal Southern hospitality from our Louisiana affiliate!

(Cheering and applause).

We are also grateful for the leadership from President Riccobono and Pam Allen, and as I've said to you before, it's phenomenal that you have our back and we have yours.

(Applause.)

This year, we're excited that we have 10 first-timers, including 3 Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners.

(Applause.)

I want to highlight some of the individuals in our delegation from our state agency, the Virginia Department of the Blind and Visually Impaired, we have many staff members, and for the first time in our delegation, the state agency director, the first time they've ever come from Virginia to a National Federation of the Blind convention, Dr. Mitchell and his wife are here to learn and grow in partnership with the National Federation of the Blind.

(Cheering and applause).

We have a participant who is going to be speaking on Sunday on the NFB Econ program, Robert Egglestein will be here to speak. We had as well on Sunday afternoon, you'll hear from Gina Clein from Smart Job about closing the disability wealth gap. We have exciting programs in Virginia. Our Silver BELLs program is a program we stole from Texas and made it even better!

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

I recognize, Norma, those are fighting words.

(Laughter.)

Our Silver BELLs program had more than 50 participants in the program learning alternative techniques surrounded by blind mentoring and role models. We have Project RISE participating. I want to highlight Brianna Silverman and Joe Rosco, our program coordination team for that program.

This year we have 10 participant in the BELL Academy in-home edition coordinated in Virginia by Louise Walsh.

We have our state convention coming up October 28th-30th in Tysons Corner, Virginia. We do not have a national rep assigned as of yet. I will serve as the delegate. Sandy Halverson, first vice president, will serve as the alternate. And I will serve on the nominating committee.

Thank you, President Riccobono, and thank you, Louisiana affiliate, for this phenomenal hospitality.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Virginia. Now hang in there with me, we do got a couple other delegations. But I have a quick announcement. It says that you can grab your lunch downstairs from the ballroom between -- well, when this session ends and 2:00. Today's offering is tuna salad sandwich with boiled egg, red onion, celery, capers, Zappo's chips, freshly baked cookie, and a bottle of water, all for $12.

Also, the Cash and carry is a great deal, you should try it too.

The Banquet Exchange table is just outside the ballroom in Acadia foyer. Please exchange your tickets for a table number. Special meal requests should have been in yesterday, but... spoiler alert, but...

(Laughter.)

We may be able to get you in just under the wire if you make a special request at the exchange table in the next 20 minutes.

Okay, Washington!

(Cheering).

WASHINGTON REP: Greetings, President Riccobono, and my Federation family. It is so wonderful to be back together again. My name is Marci Carpenter, I'm the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington, where we are proud and loud...

(Loud cheering).

... there we go! We are very proud to have with us this year two scholarship finalists, Finn Paynich and Colin Wong, plus 2021 finalist Luke Gandarias. We have with us this week the distinguished educator of blind students, superintendent of the Washington School for the Blind Scott McCallum, and we scored on the awards yesterday, our blind educator of the year, Corey Grandstaff, also of the school.

(Applause.)

We're over 50 strong this week, including at least 20 first time Federationists, first time attendees.

(Applause.)

We have with us the Dejah Powell and Matt Hines from Washington Department of Services for the Blind and a whole bunch of young folks and a few parents.

(Applause.)

I will serve -- I am the delegate, and I will serve on the nominating committee. Chris Colcock, our first vice president, is alternate delegate. Our convention will be November 4th-6th, 2022, in the Hilton in Bellevue, Washington, and we do not have a representative yet, but we would very much like to have our friend from the other Washington, Shawn Callaway.

And please come see us at A32 in the exhibit hall to buy some of our chocolate-covered cherries and chocolate-covered espresso beans! Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Washington. West Virginia. .

WV REP: Howdy, folks, this is Marcus Sulsby, the president of NFB of WV. I'd like to congratulate the Louisiana affiliate, this is my first convention and I'm very pleased. We have our scholarship finalist Katelyn Beresic of Berkeley Springs. And we have Ed, a Jernigan scholarship winner from last year.

Our convention will be the last weekend of October -- that's October 28, '29, will be held at the Pope John the 23rd Pastoral Center in Charleston, West Virginia, featuring a program called Re Visions that will get us back into the swing of things after the pandemic lull. We hope to make it a real success.

I'm honored to serve as your delegate for this convention. I'm also equally honored to serve on the nominating committee. Our first vice president, Ed McDonald, will serve as alternate delegate should the need arise.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, West Virginia.

Wisconsin.

WISCONSIN REP: Greetings, Mr. President and fellow Federationists. I am Dave Hide. I am here as delegate in lieu of our new president, Ben Dallon, who seemed to find a line on a test a few days ago.

Mr. President, I knew that it was difficult to get out of the casino in Vegas, but I didn't think it would take us three years.

(Laughter.)

I bring you greetings from your home state of, people may know is as the Dairy State, and we're proud to be here in New Orleans this year. I will be serving as delegate. Our treasurer and outgoing board member of the NFB, John Fritz, will be serving as alternate delegate. He will be serving on the nominating committee.

Our convention will be in March or April of 2023. We do not yet have a location.

And, of course, we have not been assigned a national representative.

Thank you, Mr. President, and for Pam Allen and all the good folks in Louisiana, laissez les bon temps rouler.

(Applause.)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Wisconsin. I understand that we do not have a Wyoming delegate present at this convention. So we will report 51 delegations, reporting for this convention!

(Cheering and applause).

Now, Bennett, get ready with the final door prize. I'm going to give you the top 10 states for the close, but if we could include 11, we could include Nebraska, but we can't!

So, number 10, Virginia, with 75.

Number 9, New York, 76. You can get em!

Number 8, Georgia, 79 people registered.

Colorado, 81 people registered.

Florida, 95 people registered.

Arizona, still at 97 people registered. See if they can get over 100.

California at number 4 with 128 people registered.

Texas has moved up to 155 people registered.

Still number 2 is Maryland, 212 people registered.

And number 1, with 222, a lot of twos in '22... Louisiana!

(Cheering and applause).

We also have 56 individuals from foreign nations here.

Total registration as of end of yesterday: 2,402 individuals, and I have for you today our total virtual registration. Both registrations can still be made.

Virtual registration: 1454!

We'll get a chance to see what people we have from decades. But how about one big Federation cheer?

(Cheering).

Now, Bennett, give us a door prize and then we will stand adjourned until 2:00, when we'll take up the presidential report.

BENNETT PROWS: I'll do it. We've got a mixed bag kind of a door prize at the end of this meeting. It was great. It's $50 and a wooden plaque from Touching Words, and an extra Walmart gift card!

Okay, so the winner is Sherri Brood. Sherri, are you here or did you go off to lunch and miss it.

Doesn't seem to be here.

Kimberly Evans. How about Kimberly Evans?

(Cheering).

She's here, we got her, thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: We will stand adjourned until 2:00.

(Gavel pounding).