# General Session I Transcript

(Gavel pounding).

MARK RICCOBONO: The 2023 convention of the National Federation of the Blind is now in order!

Welcome to Texas! If I could get your attention, we are going to have a very exciting morning, but I would like to start this morning with our invocation. So if I could get your attention, please. This morning for our opening invocation on this Independence Day, we have a son of Pakistani American immigrants who grew up in Massachusetts. After receiving his training from the Louisiana Center for the Blind, he attended the University of Texas at Austin, where he was recognized as a dean's distinguished graduate. Currently he is a student at Harvard Law School, where he has been recognized as a Paul and Daisy Soros fellow.

He strives to serve the community that did so much to empower him, by being an active leader in the National Federation of the Blind as well as several Pakistani Muslim American organizations.

Here for our invocation this morning is a member of our scholarship committee, Syed Rizvy

SYED: Good morning, National Federation of the Blind! Peace be upon you. I congratulate you on this July 4th independence day! I stand in front of you as an assertion of this nation's greatness, that my parents, fleeing sectarian genocide and geopolitical unrest arrived upon these hallowed shores in pursuit of the American dream. But not even in their wildest imaginations could they have dreamed that one day I would stand in front of you all as a proud blind disabled Pakistani Muslim American immigrant!

Reciting the opening invocation at the largest and most powerful gathering of blind people the world has ever seen!

So I will begin by reciting the first chapter of the holy Qur'an.

(Singing in foreign language).

And the translation is: I begin in the name of God, the beneficent and merciful, all praise belongs to the Lord of the worlds, the beneficent and the merciful, the king of the day of judgment. It is only You that we worship. It is only You that we ask for guidance from. Guidance upon the right path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your bounties, not upon those who have gone astray.

And now we pray that for all of those who have not found the independence and empowerment of the National Federation of the Blind, we hope that they come into our fold, and for those of us who are within the fold of the National Federation of the Blind, let us stand steadfast and strong in our unity and virtue.

Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Syed.

I don't know if our door prize team showed up this year, but they'll get in there when they can.

SPEAKER: We've got a door prize for the 4th of July that will be just the one you want! The first prize is 150 bucks from Louisiana's north central chapter for Pam Lander of Arizona! Pam, are you here?

MARK RICCOBONO: You've got to stand up and wave and jump around.

SPEAKER: Yell and scream! If you're not in the room, you lose.

MARK RICCOBONO: Did you find her?

SPEAKER: Apparently not here. So how about Jessica Hoquist from Alabama? We got a winner!

MARK RICCOBONO: All right. There will be many more door prizes to come. And there will also be door prizes to our virtual convention participants. Hopefully they were screaming in their living rooms.

I would like now to move to the presentation of colors and our pledge of allegiance. This will be led by the President of our National Association of Blind Veterans division. He is retired from the United States Army after 20 years of service. Please welcome Vernon Humphrey.

VERNON HUMPHREY: Thank you, Mr. President. And I'm going to kindly ask you now to clear the aisles because I got a show for you and I don't want nobody getting run over.

Color guard, post!

And we're being accompanied by a wonderful drum corps of young people. They're doing a great thing in improving lives and helping the community.

Bulldog, bring my people in.

(Color guard marching in).

I think they're so good, I would like to take them to every convention!

Now I would like you all, if you're able, to stand and join me in the pledge of allegiance. Afterwards, we will sing the national anthem, and I would like you to remain standing if you can.

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.

Where's my singer at?

SPEAKER: I'm here.

VERNON HUMPHREY: Tell us your name before you start.

SPEAKER: Hi, everyone. I'm from Florida.

¶ 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, over 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. O, say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave, for the land of the free and the home of the brave? ¶ ¶

VERNON HUMPHREY: We're not going to leave you with that. The performing arts division has offered us another beautiful voice for another song. Please do.

¶ ¶ 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. ¶ ¶

[Applause]

VERNON HUMPHREY: That by the way was Rachel, another fine member of the performing arts.

(Audio clip).

I walked through a county courthouse square. On a park bench an old man was sitting there. I said, your old Court House is kinda run down.

No, a man said, it will do for our town. I said, the flagpole is leaning and the flag is ragged. He said, have a seat. And I sat down. Is this the first time you've been to our little town, he asked? I said, I think it is. He said, I don't like to brag, but we're kind of proud of that ragged old flag.

You see, we got a little hole in that flag there when Washington took it across the Delaware. And it got powder burned the night that Francis Scott Key sang O say can you see. And it got a bad rip in New Orleans when Packingham and Jackson took it to the scene. And it almost fell at the Alamo beside the Texas flag, but she waved on through.

She got cut with a sword at Chancerville and got cut again in Shiloh Hill. There was Robert E. Lee, Bouregard, and Bragg, and the south wind blew hard on that ragged old flag.

On Flanders Field in World War I she got a big hole from a Bertha gun. She turned blood red in World War II. She hung limp and low a time or two. She was in Korea, Vietnam, she went where she was sent by her Uncle Sam. She waved from our ships upon the briny foam and now they've about quit waving here at home. She's been burned, dishonored, denied, refused. And the government for which she stands is scandalized throughout the land. And she's getting threadbare and she's wearing thin, but she's in good shape for the shape she's in. Oh, she's been through the fire before, and I believe she can take a whole lot more.

So we raise her up every morning. We take her down every night. We don't let her touch the ground, and we fold her up right.

On second thought, I do like to brag, because I'm mighty proud of that ragged old flag.

[Applause]

VERNON HUMPHREY: Color guard commander, retire the colors.

(Color guard marching out)

(Drum corps drumming)

(Drum corps marching out)

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much to our color guard.

[Applause]

We will continue the celebration of our veterans on this independence day in a little while. I'm here in my American flag pin, but I'm going to get dressed for the opening ceremony while we do another door prize. Go ahead, Bennett.

SPEAKER: We have a winner here. It's Richard Buzz Carver from Maine. Richard Carver from Maine.

How about Lily Fitzgerald from Virginia?

How about Kyle Stile from Texas? Is he here? Jump up and down. Yell and scream! They do that in Texas anyway. Is he here? Yes, he's here. Okay.

MARK RICCOBONO: I think so. Okay. Excellent. Excellent. All right. Now I am in my appropriate Houston Astros jersey. Braille jersey, that is.

## Deep in the Heart of the Federation: Welcome from the NFB of Texas

Here to present deep in the heart of the Federation is the host of our 2023 convention, what a tremendous job her leadership and the rest of our affiliate are doing, here is Norma Crosby!

[Applause]

NORMA CROSBY: Well, Mr. President, so you couldn't wait until Friday night, huh?

MARK RICCOBONO: Had to get warmed up.

NORMA CROSBY: Getting warmed up for that first pitch. He might be practicing back here, y'all. So you in your Houston Astros jersey and me in my rainbow dress today, what a pair.

Those drums make my heart beat faster.

Good morning, Federation family. In 1971 the Federation met in Houston at the Shamrock Hilton Hotel. Kenneth Jernigan was our dynamic leader then. And today we have a new President, who is just as dynamic and who will lead us with grace and the same grit and determination that Kenneth Jernigan did as he taught us all about the nature of independence.

Today Mark Riccobono faces different challenges than Kenneth Jernigan faced, but he and the other leaders of this movement will meet those challenges as they arise. And we know we can all meet those challenges because just like those who came before us, we have the support and the strength of our membership teaching us how to lead the way. We have you, and with that powerful force, nothing can stop us.

[Applause]

Today we're in Texas, and people often judge us by our tough exterior. But at our core, we're loving, kind, and accepting of everyone. Take our affiliate, for example. And what a great example. They're culturally diverse. Our board is made up of nine members, five of whom are women. And as a woman myself, I believe that fact says a lot about who we are.

[Applause]

We know that women are ready to lead and to take over the world. We also know that Black, brown, LGBTQ members should have a place at the table, and on our board, they absolutely do. We know that our membership should reflect the diversity of this city and our state, and while we know there is more to do, it really does. Our affiliate is diverse, active, and a great example of what a Federation affiliate can be.

So I thanked some people by name yesterday. I want to thank our whole affiliate this morning.

[Applause]

You know, we love our rodeo in Houston. Houston has the world's biggest rodeo, and we love our rodeo. And every year, trail riders from across the state converge on Houston and turn this urban space into a big country town for 3 weeks. But you know what? Those cowboys who ride in are of all colors, faiths, ages, gender identities, and of all political stripes, because we don't care who you are in Texas; we'll take ya.

[Applause]

We love each other in Houston. It's truly a safe space for all, despite its reputation as a rough and tumble city. And as I told the rookie round up the other night, we know most of you aren't from Texas. Well, there's a good chunk back there that are.

[Applause]

[Cheering]

But Texas sure does want you anyway. We'll embrace you, we'll make a place for you if you'll accept us as we accept you.

The mayor of Houston is a great example of what I'm talking about. He's a Black Harvard-educated attorney who works with people of all backgrounds to grow our city into a thriving place that includes people who speak more than 90 languages. His administration practices what it preaches when it comes to diversity. In fact, a few years ago, when he was looking for someone to take over as head of the mayor's office for people with disabilities, who did he choose? He chose a brown gay blind man whose background in governmental affairs came as a result of the opportunities granted him by being able to work with the National Federation of the Blind.

[Applause]

When he held rallies in support of voter rights in Texas, he made sure the disability community was included, and especially the National Federation of the Blind. Mayor Turner is serving in his last year as mayor, and even though he couldn't be here with us today in person, he has sent a message of welcome to our convention. And with that, I give you a friend and an ally of all blind people, Mayor Sylvester Turner.

[Video]

SPEAKER: Hello. This is mayor Sylvester Turner, and while I could not join you today in person, I am honored to be able to extend a welcome to the National Federation of the Blind on behalf of the city of Houston. I want to especially thank our 3,000 visitors from across the nation that are here today. I sincerely hope you're enjoying the hospitality Houstonians are known for. We are glad you're here.

I want to thank first the Houston system, Hilton Americas, and my mayor's office for people with disabilities, especially our director, for working together and attentively in ensuring the success of the convention. Houston celebrates the achievements of blind people leading in our places of worship, in running successful businesses, in advocating in our communities, and the contributions blind people provide in making our culture more vibrant. These contributions are made possible through a culmination of tools like white canes, accessible public transit, and the determination of blind people themselves to control their own destiny. All of you here today represent the most assertive and inclusive United States cities who support the advancement of new technologies and shape how cities do business by improving the quality of life for blind people. The work being done this week by you will help transform our cities to the kind of cities that we want to be proud to live in. This is what's possible when we put inclusion and equity at the center of all we do.

Let me not forget to thank NFB President Mark Riccobono, Texas President Norma Crosby, and the Houston chapter President Stacy Gallegos for choosing Houston for the 2023 National Federation of the Blind convention.

So today, let's celebrate our existence, our lived experiences, our diversity, and the strong sense of community that we have built with one another. And let's challenge ourselves, our friends, families, and community partners, to eliminate the physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent people that are blind from enjoying full access to educational and employment opportunities as well as community life.

[Applause]

NORMA CROSBY: I think the mayor hit a home run, Mr. President.

Yesterday I thanked the fabulous team of Texans who have made this convention run. They're a perfect example of what it means to work together to make dreams a reality. Our leaders get a lot of credit for the work we do, and we do work hard. But without members, a leader can accomplish nothing. I'm fortunate to have great members who provide strong support to me, to our national President, and to one another, just as you all do in your affiliates.

This convention is a space in which we all work together to make policy, to dream big dreams, to change the world for blind people, and yes, to have some fun. Our affiliate is proud to have you here. We want you to learn who we really are: A hardworking bunch of people who develop and carry out programs for blind kids, high school and college students, and blind seniors, a group that loves one another and is willing to love you too, if you'll let us. A bunch of rabble rousers who can always be counted on for hospitality and a good time, but who get to work when it's time to do that. We're the National Federation of the Blind of Texas, and you know who we remind me of? You! You may think we're a lot different, but when it comes to our commitment to this organization and the work we do, when it comes to our willingness to work hand in hand, to change what it means to be blind, when it comes to loving one another, no matter our color, religion, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristic, we are you.

[Applause]

We are your home. You're in a safe place. And we are so proud that you have chosen to share your Federation family spirit with us this week. Bienvenidos.

[Applause]

(Mariachi band playing)

[Applause]

(Mariachi band continues playing)

[Applause]

(Mariachi band marching out)

MARK RICCOBONO: Let's give it up for our host affiliate!

[Applause]

What a great welcome.

SPEAKER: How about a door prize?

MARK RICCOBONO: Go for it.

SPEAKER: We certainly have had a great thing that the affiliate did here, the host, and we want to include our virtual experience folks with us. So we're going to give a door prize now to a virtual participant. And you will have to get through the computer in some way and send an email to prize@NFB.org and use the code word for this prize, which is "NFB23". If you don't have that, if you're not listening, then you lose. Sorry about that. But the winner is Dana Altman from New Jersey. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Do you have an in the room door prize?

SPEAKER: Oh, sure we do! We've got a hundred bucks here. $100 from NFB of Arkansas. Let's see if he's here. Mike Mellow from Fremont, California. Are you here, Mike? Step up to the mic, Mike.

How about Skyler Kovitch from California? All right. He's here.

## Celebration of Freedom: Veterans Recognized

MARK RICCOBONO: You got him. Okay. What a great opening.

Now we're going to move back to our celebration of freedom for July 4, and to recognize our veterans in the National Federation of the Blind, I would like to again welcome Vernon Humphrey to the microphone.

[Applause]

VERNON HUMPHREY: It is one of my greatest honors to have the pleasure to introduce the wonderful heroes that have been in my life and yours, even though you didn't know it sometimes. Please introduce the veterans.

SPEAKER: Paul Ficaro, Maryland, United States Army.

SPEAKER: Chaplain CJ Campbell, U.S. nave, class of '72! Go Navy! Beat Army!

SPEAKER: Ray Wizen, United States Army.

SPEAKER: Quentin Johnson, United States Marine Corps.

SPEAKER: Terry Presley, South Carolina, United States Air Force.

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

SPEAKER: Jason Shermill, Arizona, United States Navy and United States Army.

SPEAKER: Donald Knolls, Arizona, United States Marine Corps!

SPEAKER: Jeff Merklin, Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S. Army.

SPEAKER: Ramona Koker, Reno, Nevada, U.S. Army National Guard.

SPEAKER: Becky Kamar, Nevada, U.S. Army.

SPEAKER: Jose Sinten, Dayton, Ohio. I served 21 years with the United States Marine Corps.

SPEAKER: Bud Pierce, Ohio, U.S. Air Force.

SPEAKER: Dave Banazak from Ohio, United States Air Force.

SPEAKER: Michael Madden, Lincoln Nebraska, United States Marine Corps.

SPEAKER: TP Lucas, representing Phoenix, Arizona, United States Army.

SPEAKER: Trent Tedder, United States Army, Desert Storm.

SPEAKER: Good morning Federation. Harvey Gary. Baltimore, Maryland. United States Air Force.

SPEAKER: Dave Fithens U.S. Navy retired San Diego, California.

SPEAKER: Maxine civil air patrol from Mississippi.

SPEAKER: Brad Loves, United States Navy, Lincoln, Nebraska.

SPEAKER: Vernon Richmond from North Carolina, Army, Vietnam veteran, combat infantry soldier, and a trained killer.

SPEAKER: Hi. David Bundy, South Carolina, United States Army Reserve.

SPEAKER: Benjamin Miles, United States Navy, Louisiana.

SPEAKER: Wayne Field, pilot jack officer for 40 years United States Navy.

SPEAKER: From Connecticut, U.S. Army.

SPEAKER: Jim Jonas, Rochester, New York, United States Marine Corps.

SPEAKER: Hawaii, United States Air Force.

SPEAKER: Howard, United States Air Force, the great state of Wilson, North Carolina.

SPEAKER: Gunnery sergeant Roy Stinson from the great state of Arizona. United States Marine Corps.

SPEAKER: Doug, Florida, United States Navy.

SPEAKER: Dwight Sayer, Florida, United States Air Force.

VERNON HUMPHREY: Vernon Humphrey, United States state master sergeant retired medical corps 20 years, Georgia!

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Everyone please join me.

¶ Oh, beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountains' majesty, above fruited plain. America, America, God shed His grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea ¶ ¶

VERNON HUMPHREY: Being a veteran means many things to many people, but as a veteran, you learn that we can't do it alone. We have to have our support sister services. We get along like siblings do, but, you know, I can pick on the Marine Corps, but you better not. Because we love to hate each other but we love each other. But by working in this atmosphere, we have learned many things. And it's something that many of you may not realize. You are serviced by an invisible army all the time. If it weren't for the wonderful administrative, logistical, and technical staff from the NFB, we wouldn't have a conference.

[Applause]

So I would like to thank them on behalf of the veterans and hopefully on behalf of all of you for everything they've done to make our life better. Thank you.

[Applause]

President Riccobono, on behalf of the blind veterans division, since you told me your dad was Navy, we have a set of dog tags for you in Braille that say U.S. Navy.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much.

[Applause]

VERNON HUMPHREY: Without him and without y'all, we wouldn't be anything. We are the veterans and we appreciate the attention, but, you know, we do it for you. And you do it for us. So thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay! Let's give it up one more time for our veterans.

[Applause]

Isn't that a great way to kick off independence day here?

SPEAKER: I think we ought to do a door prize. That was a great thing to do. And I guess I didn't do it right the first time with the virtual. I've got to name two more people and 50 bucks they're going to get. James Steel of Delaware uses the code word "NFB23" and sends an email to prize@NFB.org. And the other person is Alicia Lee from, guess where? Texas! Use that NFB23.

And live, the person's name is Rose Warner of Colorado. Are you here?

You got 50 bucks. Not here?

I bet this person is here. Sandy Halverson from Virginia. Of course. We all know Sandy.

MARK RICCOBONO: She's probably back there at the SUN table.

SPEAKER: The sun has risen. She's there.

## Roll Call of States

MARK RICCOBONO: Now, very shortly, I want to warn our delegates we're going to move to the roll call of states very shortly. And I want to let you know that there are microphones in the center aisle that runs left to right throughout the ballroom at the states of Indiana, Maryland, New York, and Texas. So if our delegates could begin to get ready, especially those from Alaska, Alabama, and Arizona, if you could get ready, delegates, when we get there, as you know, we are going to ask you for who is your delegate, who is your alternate, who will be serving on the nominating committee, when your state convention is, and if you have other important details to share, we would love it.

Before we get there, I want to introduce for an update on our progress, Ryan Strunk!

[Applause]

RYAN STRUNK: You are all my PAC today! You are all my PAC because you are all going to help me continue to do the work that we need to do to grow the National Federation of the Blind! So where is my PAC this morning? Where are ya.

[Cheering]

All right. I want to talk to you about a few things regarding the PAC plan and then I want to ask you for lots and lots of help. So I gave you some facts and figures yesterday at the board meeting. And I have some updated figures for you now. And I want you to help me help you get lots more updated figures before this time is over. Right now every month we are bringing in $37,909.79, and that's being done by 1,277 people. Hold that number in your mind for a moment. Every year that means we're bringing in $458,853 and 70 cents. Now, I want to grow all three of those numbers. I want to grow all three of those numbers because it's important for us to be able to continue to do that work. I want to grow the $458,853.70 because that means we can do more work. And I want to grow that 1,277 contributors because every new person who joins the PAC plan, whether they are a member of ours or somebody interested in us or somebody you know, we'll be that much closer to someone learning about the work that we do and being invested in our success.

Here are the four things you can do to contribute. There are four. For everybody in this room, all of my PAC, the easiest and best and quickest way is to go to the PAC table in the back of the room. Now, we have a very classy bunch of people back there, and if you lean in real close and listen real closely, you might just hear them back there. That clown horn was on purpose, I want you to know. So please come back to the PAC table between doors A and B.

You can also go online. Look, I'm a millennial. Half of you right now have your cell phones out. Go to www.NFB.org/PAC, and you can contribute right there.

Also, while you have your phones out, because again, I know you do, post that link on Mastodon, on Twitter, on Facebook, send out an email blast, do whatever you have to do to get your friends and family on board. 1,277 subscribers needs to grow.

Third, if you do not want to get online, you can also give us a call. That number is 877-NFB-2PAC.

Fourth way, you can send us an email at PAC@NFB.org.

For the people who contribute at this convention, whether you increase your pledge or whether you start a new pledge, every session we are going to do a drawing, and five people who move on PAC have a shot at winning $25. And I've got 30 gift cards to give away, which means you guys have to keep giving.

The other thing is that I have two gift cards, cash gift cards. Both of them for $250 each. And one new contributor and one existing increaser are going to have a shot to win those at the banquet. So get involved there.

The last piece, for those of you guys who like animals, we still have our contests, the PACmule, the PACrat, and the PACyderm. The PACmule is for the division who increases the most. I was told this morning that Carlton Walker of the parents has an entire stable of toy mules because the parents keep winning! So if you want to increase Carlton's stable, parents, get back there.

The final one is the PACyderm, a beautiful mammoth. I have that for the division that increases the most percentage wise.

And the PACrat for the individual.

So go to www.NFB.org/PAC, call 1-877-NFB-2PAC, email us at PAC@NFB.org. Or go back to the PAC table in the back of the room. Let's go build the National Federation of the Blind! Give it up, my PAC!

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much to the team working on the PAC program.

We are now going to roll into our roll call of states. We will be calling on each affiliate to report in to the convention, and if they're ready, we're going to start with Alabama.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Greetings, President Riccobono! From Alabama gulf coast, we're excited about being here today. Definitely to be a part of this momentous occasion each year.

President Riccobono, first of all, our entire affiliate would like to say thank you for what you continue to do for our organization. You are the reason we are where we are, and we know that with your leadership, we will continue to climb greater heights. Thank you so very much.

[Applause]

The Alabama delegation has three Jernigan scholarships with us this time. We have five new members here present today. We were instrumental in participating in NFB legislation day, continually advocating for electronic voting in the state of Alabama. We are actively working with the League of Women Voters and other organizations to definitely create greater opportunities for the disabled when it comes to voting. We were able to defeat a voter suppression bill that would have, if passed, been detrimental to the disabled community.

[Applause]

We were able to testify in the House of Representatives and the Senate side, which caused this bill to be defeated this time.

We have with us today Jessica Edmondson and about 15 staff members from Alabama institute for the Deaf and blind. We are planning a day in August. We are excited about the opportunity for providing this platform to our blind students. We know in the National Federation of the Blind that our students are capable and we are giving them every opportunity to prove to themselves and others that we are here.

I am the delegate Vice President, Tamika Williams, the alternate. I will be serving on the nominating committee. We do not have a location to date for our 2024 convention. The date will be March 8-10. And let me also share that in 2024, our BELL Academy will be held at the Alabama school for the blind. Thank you, sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Alabama!

Alaska.

SPEAKER: I am Kevin Whitley, the affiliate and delegate. I have Tiara with us today, a first time convention attendee and also a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner. We also donate $50 to the SUN Fund, to the White Cane Fund, the Kenneth Jernigan fund, and the Jacobus tenBroek Fund. Our conference is to be announced. It should be in the first week of November. I will be serving on the nominating committee. Thank you, guys.

MARK RICCOBONO: Do you have an alternate delegate, Alaska?

SPEAKER: Yes, Tiara Kilgore.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Great. Thank you very much, Alaska.

Will Arkansas, California, and Colorado please get to a microphone? We will now move to Arizona.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Good morning, Mr. President and my Federation family! In Arizona, at this convention, we are deep in the heart of the Federation, and the Federation is deep in the heart of Arizona.

Mr. President, we have 39 first time attendees with us this year. One of which, Betty Love, is a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner. Amongst our delegation, we have Eve Sanchez, who is the supervisor of the older independent living blind program through the RSA in Arizona. We have a national scholarship finalist, Amar Tanin. He is also one of our 2022 scholarship winners. We have a tenBroek scholar who won her second scholarship last year with us, Tasnime, who is also the chair of the Muslim group and also a 2022 state scholarship winner. We had two BELL programs this year, both of which started on Memorial Day. We had a total of 24 BELL ringers this year.

We have a convention, and it is coming fast. It is August 24-27 at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Phoenix. We do not have a national rep assigned, so I am going to put in my request now for Shawn Calloway. I am the delegate. Our First Vice President, Jordan Moon, is the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Thank you to my Federation family.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Arizona.

Let's move to Arkansas.

SPEAKER: Thank you, President Riccobono and the national board for bringing us to Houston, Texas. As the state President of Arkansas, I am proud to announce that we have 10 first timers. One is a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner, and we have a 2023 national scholarship finalist, Athena Scopely. Ginger Robertson is our alternate. We have no date as of now for our convention. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Arkansas.

California!

SPEAKER: California! Good morning, my name is Tim Elder, affiliate President, National Federation of the Blind of California. I will proudly serve as the delegate. Our fabulous Rachel Grider will serve as the alternate. I am happy to serve on the nomination committee.

We are going to have a state convention, but because California never likes to let things get dull, we want to switch it up. So we're moving our convention from the fall to the spring of 2024. Our convention will be March 14-17th, 2024, at the Rancho Cordovo Marriott in Sacramento.

We do have a caucus tonight at 6:00 p.m. in room 339. We have over 168 virtual and in-person attendees here at the convention, and watching on Zoom. Hey, folks on Zoom.

We are very proud of our two scholarship winners. Thank you Trisha and congratulations Skyler on your first convention.

We have two Kenneth Jernigan Fund recipients including one deafblind recipient who is attending her first national convention.

This past year California was very proud to stand in solidarity with our college students. In particular, 2 months ago, we had over 20 Federationists standing in solidarity in the courtroom for the jury trial against Los Angeles community college district.

[Applause]

Those over 20 Federationists and blind students were in that courtroom to hear when Roy testified that professors had explicitly said that blind students were not welcome in their classroom because it would slow the class down. We were there to hear testimony that Roy had complained and other blind students had complained about inaccessible math and other learning software, and the college did nothing in response. And we were there when the jury awarded Roy over $200,000 in damages.

[Applause]

Roy is here in the convention with us, attending his first national convention. So Roy, we are going to continue to stand with you. Thank you. And we stand with our students.

California has been on the front lines of working with the autonomous vehicle manufacturers. The we've been working with partners to promote this technology. Everyone here should come to San Francisco very soon and take your own test ride in a self-driving completely autonomous vehicle with no human other than you in this robot taxi.

Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, California.

Get a few more people registered, you might jump into number 4 but there's another state right behind you as well so the race for the attendance banner is still on.

Would Connecticut, Delaware, and D.C. please get to a microphone. We will now move to Colorado.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Good morning! I am not the big booming voice that normally greets our convention from the state of Colorado, and I know that many of you are joining with me in missing Scott LaBarre this morning. So I wanted for one last time to have Scott's help to do the roll call. So Will, can you cue our audio?

SCOTT LaBARRE: Colorado! The only thing that soars higher than our Rocky Mountains, our purple mountain majesty, is our hope and our expectations own our love for the blind of the United States! We have so much about which to be proud in Colorado. Chief among them is our training center, the Colorado Center for the Blind!

[Applause]

SPEAKER: All right. So do we have anybody here from the Colorado Center for the Blind? I didn't really hear you guys.

[Cheering]

Oh, there they are.

I want to say a special welcome to our First Vice President and director of the Colorado Center for the Blind, Julie Deden.

[Applause]

And an extra special welcome to our long time door prize lady and founder of the Colorado Center for the Blind, Diane McGeorge.

[Applause]

I've had six people say to me this morning make sure you don't forget to mention that we are home to the -- what is it? NBA champions, the Denver Nuggets!

[Laughter]

I kept getting congratulations texts at night and I was like, what happened?

I will serve as our delegate. Julie Deden will serve as our alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. I would like to say a congratulations to our national scholarship winner, Dan Hlevinka. Our state scholarship winner, Chris Colin. And I would love to extend a warm invitation to all of you to join our blind beer tasting on September 9. Mark your calendars and buy your tickets to Colorado. Just over a month after that, we will be having our NFB of Colorado state convention at the Denver Marriott South from October 26-29. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: That's basketball, Jessica, basketball.

SPEAKER: All right. Let's do a virtual round door prize because Diane is definitely listening with us virtually and we sure miss you, Diane, every time you're not here.

[Applause]

I'm going to read three names of people who can win 40 bucks on the virtual. June Ogara from Minnesota. We've got Adriana Banos from Texas. And then we've got the final one is a person named Dizon Daran from California. Send a note to prize@NFB.org with the code word "blind vets," within 30 minutes, you'll win 40 bucks.

And we got one in-person $50 gift card. From William Johnson of Georgia. Are you here? We got him.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Are you good, Bennett?

SPEAKER: Oh, we got him, yes.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Good. Connecticut.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and national board members. This is Maryanne Melley. I'll be the delegate. Nathaniel Wales will be the alternate. I'll also be on the nominating committee. I would like to welcome all your virtual viewers from Connecticut. And our state convention will be November 3-5 at the Holiday Inn in New London.

We had a scholarship winner but she had the opportunity to study in Spain starting at the same time as our national convention, so what a predicament to be in. She chose to go to Spain and she will reapply next year and hopefully win. So we are very proud of Lizzy Capelli. Hopefully she will have an opportunity to be a finalist next year.

Thank you so much, Houston, for hosting this wonderful convention. And we look forward to experiencing all you have planned for us for the rest of this week. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Connecticut.

We have an announcement. Reminder, at the back of the room there is a table where you can get assistive listening devices and devices for the Spanish interpretation that is happening. A $40 deposit is required in cash to receive one of the devices. This announcement comes from Adana Frankel. And there's a PAC table and a SUN table back there and there's probably a Dream Maker Circle table back there.

But for right now, I think we should have a fit break!

SPEAKER: Houston, we have a problem. There are way too many people sitting in those seats right now. You need to stand up and we're going to do a little small space line dancing. So we're going to step right together, right together, left together, left together, kick right, kick left, shake your hips and tap tip your hat. So when the music starts, I will cue you for those things.

Will, let's hit it!

Right together, right. Left together left. Kick, kick, and tip your hat. Right together right, left together left. Kick, kick, and tip that hat.

Thank you!

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: You know the youth track gave me a cow-printed cowboy hat. I was told not to wear it in public so I didn't wear it down here.

[Laughter]

All right. We will now move to Delaware!

SPEAKER: Good morning, Federationists! Thank you. I'm Sylvia Reid and I hope I'm not too close to this mic. I'm the delegate. My valiant trustee husband George Reid is the alternate delegate. And I want to thank my team of dedicated folks, most of whom are not here. They're on Zoom. So they are here virtually. And there are five of us, possibly six, here in person.

We have given $50 to each of the four funds this time. We have been working with our state legislature to implement our three resolutions that have to do with websites and with better, more strategically located audio pedestrian signals. And also we are working with our state agency to get more blind people in more prominent positions so that we can talk about us with us.

[Applause]

Our northern chapter had a Braille family fun day that was according to some folks who had never dealt with us before way too much fun. And also educational. Ha ha.

I will be on the nominating committee, and I just want to say next year we hope to have our BELL Academy back again. I was head teacher for that for a couple of years, and I miss it.

Also I just want to say that although we are the 49th largest state in the union, we are the 42nd largest NFB contributor! We are small but we are mighty! Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Did you tell us about your state convention, Delaware?

SPEAKER: I am sorry. Our state convention is October 27-28, and I know that President Riccobono is going to get us a great rep. Can't wait.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Delaware.

Will Florida, Georgia, and Hawaii please move to the microphones.

District of Columbia!

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono. My name is Shawn Calloway and I serve as President of the National Federation of the Blind of the District of Columbia. For the first time since 2019, I'm happy to say that we're finally going to have an in-person convention. In conjunction with the Embassy Suites in the Dr. Martin Luther King library, we will have our convention from October 12-14. Included in our convention I believe is the largest gathering of blind women which will be our blind women's empowerment program led by Libra Robertson.

I will serve as your delegate. Chrichelle Brown will serve as the alternate. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, District of Columbia.

Florida.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono! Good morning to our national board and to all of our NFB members! Welcome, welcome.

We have two Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners that are super excited to be here. We also have a larger than last year's student division. Where are you guys? Uh-oh. Some of our Florida team is running away because of the announcement that we will be hosting the national convention next year. We hope to see you all in attendance.

We have our state convention October 6-8 in Tampa at the Embassy Suites USF. We hope to see all of you in attendance as well.

The delegate is myself, and the alternate will be second Vice President Camille Tate. Thank you so much.

MARK RICCOBONO: All right. Who is serving on the nominating committee, Florida?

SPEAKER: Myself.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much, Florida. Appreciate it.

We will now move to Georgia.

SPEAKER: All right. Thank you, thank you. Greetings, President Riccobono, national board of directors, Federation family, and a huge shoutout to our virtual Federation family and friends.

I am Dorothy Griffin, affiliate President of the great state of Georgia! I am serving as the delegate. Our alternate is our second Vice President Patrice Lewis. I will be serving on the nominating committee.

Our 2023 state convention is currently under negotiation for the month of October. We will have our Braille academy camp beginning July 10-21.

Also we have been working with our legislators on the state level thanks to our state legislative chair McArthur Charrett. And we have our legislation that came out of the Senate for the Georgia Braille literacy bill. And we have been graced with our student scholarship finalist by the name of Sara Fulsome.

We have five Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners in attendance. Georgia has currently I think 55 in-person registrations and 15 virtual in our convention today. And we are excited to be here, deep in the heart of Texas! Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Georgia. We will now move to Hawaii!

SPEAKER: Aloha! President Riccobono, my name is Virgil Stinnett, President of NFB of Hawaii. We have 10 members here today from our training center, five students and five staff, total of six new members to convention. And we also have a total of 18 here. But I do want to say that we are very dedicated because we have members online at 4:00 a.m. listening to this convention. And that's 4:00 a.m. Hawaii Time.

[Applause]

We also have a new member of the NOPBC board, Tabitha Mitchell.

And I'm really proud of our affiliate because we had four legislative issues in Hawaii and they all passed this year.

[Applause]

We're also one of the first states in the union to pass the prescription bill in Hawaii. Our state convention this year will be in beautiful Waikiki. So it will be September 15-16. We right now do not have a national rep, but I would like to see if we could get Everette Bacon. Our delegate is myself. Alternate is our second VP Katie Keim. And I will be serving on the nominating committee. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Hawaii!

[Applause]

I do acknowledge that our delegate from Utah has said he's willing. We'll discuss it later.

[Laughter]

Let's move to Idaho!

SPEAKER: Good morning, fellow Federationists. This is Dana Ard, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho. Glad to be here with our other members. I am the delegate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Susan Bradley is the alternate delegate. Our convention is scheduled in March. We don't have an exact date. I believe we are going to be at the Best Western convention and conference center in Burley, Idaho, this year, spring, a good time to come to Idaho!

We have excite things going on in Idaho. We have a YouTube channel called Idaho's Blind. And it is so exciting because we have gotten 78 likes but our latest video on the YouTube channel which features our very own Ramona Walhov crossing a street has gotten 2.8K views.

[Applause]

Now, I have to say, I didn't get that many views for one of the ones I did. I did several. But I did one called something like guide dogs have fun too, showing me throwing a ball down the hall for my guide dog Goblet. And that got some views but not like Ramona.

We are also proud to say that we are having our BELL and Beyond camp. It is going to be July 24-30. This is a residential camp for kids ages 7-17. It is free to families, and we do accept people from out of state. So if you know of somebody who would like to have the experience of having a week-long camp with blindness skills emphasis and especially in Braille, let me know because I believe we still have space. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Idaho.

Illinois.

MARILYN GREEN: Good morning, President Riccobono and my Federation family! My name is Marilyn Green and I am honored to serve as the President of the state of Illinois!

We have this year four Jernigan convention scholarship winners. We have a national scholarship finalist, Erst Emmanuel Peoples. We are so excited. We have a state convention coming up in October, October 13-14. We do not have a national rep assigned as of yet. I will be the delegate. Denise Avant, our First Vice President, will be the alternate. And I will serve on the nominating committee.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Illinois.

Will Iowa, Kansas, and Kentucky please get to microphones?

Indiana!

SPEAKER: Good morning, my fellow Federationists and President Riccobono. I am Kane Brolin and I am serving as the delegate and the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Indiana. I am also extremely honored that our long time past President and national board member Mr. Ron Brown is here at convention.

[Applause]

And also immediate past President Diane Graves is here at convention too.

Our youngest members, I want to give a shoutout to Jada and Jordan Devro. They are twins celebrating their 16th birthday this month.

[Applause]

I would also like to announce that we as a state affiliate have given $125 each to the Kenneth Jernigan Fund, the tenBroek Fund, the SUN Fund, and the White Cane Fund. And we also celebrate the fact that for several years we have continued to run a television show NFB-NEWSLINE is a big, big deal in Indiana. My alternate delegate, First Vice President, Lee Martin, actually hosts a television show that is on over the air television available also I think online, and he highlights NFB-NEWSLINE as well as the achievements of great blind people and Federationists I think on the weekly basis.

Our state convention will be happening between October 12-15, at the Embassy Suites Indianapolis North. Like you all to come. And we would like to request at this time that Barbara Manuel consider being the national representative. And I thank you very much from the state of Indiana. It is a great honor to be here. Oh, and I'm serving. I am also serving on the nominating committee.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Indiana.

Before we move to the next state, just a reminder that we are still should be very aware of any symptoms of illness in and about the convention. Of course people are welcome to wear masks. You got a nice mask in your registration kit so you're welcome to wear that. We do have tests available. I'm sure they are available at the NFB information table, at the hospitality suite, and a number of other places. If do you need a COVID test, they are available and we would encourage people that are experiencing symptoms to test and to not come spread their symptoms in the ballroom.

Thank you to everybody for being conscientious of your own health and the health of others in and about the convention.

And by the way, if you haven't already found out, there are a number of places where there are hand sanitizer stations. So continue to take advantage of all these services available.

Let's move now to Iowa.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Good morning, Federation family! President Riccobono, and the board of directors! Greetings from Iowa. LSU, sorry, I have to do this. Home of the women's college basketball player of the year Caitlin Clark!

[Applause]

All right. Let's get to the good stuff. We have at this convention one Jernigan scholarship winner. We have a number of students and staff from the LEAP program and the blindness empowerment and independence center from the Iowa department for the blind.

Now, for the really good stuff. I as President will be serving as delegate. Our affiliate First Vice President Cindy Ray will serve as alternate. I will be serving on the nominating committee.

Our state convention is September 15-16 at the beautiful Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Des Moines Northwest in Urbandale. Virgil, there may be some competition here, because we would love to have Everette Bacon at our state convention, but President Riccobono, you are welcome as well.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

As of yet we do not have a national delegate assigned. Thank you, sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Iowa.

I would like to pause the roll call of states for just a moment, and I would like to give the floor to Sharon Omvick.

SPEAKER: Good morning, dear friends. I come to you today as a very grateful person. As you know, my husband Jim passed away April 27 last year. For me, I think I knew on our first date I would marry this man. We both knew almost from the beginning we loved each other in a deep and abiding way. Truly, he was a prince of a husband.

Jim had two great loves in his life, though. The NFB and me. As most of you know, the Federation meant everything to Jim. He worked tirelessly for the Federation in everything he did. There was no line of separation between his personal life and his Federation life. Both blended together with no effort at all.

He felt, however, he owed a debt far greater than he could ever repay.

One fun and interesting thing he did took place right here in Houston, in 1971, when our convention was held at the Shamrock Hilton hotel. A press person asked, if a blind person could take a dive from the 10-meter board at the hotel swimming pool. Jim was chosen to do it.

[Laughter]

He warned the press, get your best photo op on the first dive, because it's the only one I'm going to do. He was a little apprehensive, but his dive was perfect.

[Applause]

If you're interested in seeing the photo, I have it with me. Look me up. I'm in the Iowa delegation.

You see, before Jim met the Federation, he felt there was no future for him. No hope for a future. The school for the blind did not give him hope. And Jim came from a wonderful family. But they couldn't provide that hope for him.

It was this movement, all of you, who provided that hope. I think most of you know the rest of Jim's story. And so that's why I want to say thank you for what you did for Jim. You saved his life. And I want to say thank you from me also certainly for enriching my own life and of our entire family, and for the cards and letters, flowers, memorial contributions, and your notes of appreciation for what Jim meant to you. All of these things continue to sustain me. Thank you for being who you are and for what you do. God bless America and long live the National Federation of the Blind!

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much. We are honored for so many reasons, especially to have been part of Jim's story. But as I will give you a little reveal of the presidential report later today, we are the proud stewards now of a number of artifacts and papers from Jim's personal collection which will become part of our library and museum in the future!

[Applause]

That deserves a door prize.

SPEAKER: Yes, it does. We've got a great door prize. We have a bag with some skin care products in it. And a can opener. All ready to go for somebody. The winner is Dorothy Hilton, of South Carolina. She's here. We got her. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: You said a can opener?

SPEAKER: And a purse.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. All right.

SPEAKER: And skin care. That was a new wrinkle, you know.

MARK RICCOBONO: All right. We got it, right?

Okay. Let's move to Kansas.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: President Riccobono, board of directors, and fellow Federationists, good morning. Greetings from the sunflower state. I am Tom Page, President of National Federation of the Blind of Kansas. We are working actively and are highly engaged to try to improve the lives of blind people at all levels and for all people in all walks of life. We are so pleased to have two Jernigan scholarship recipients with us this year and several other first time attendees. And we are very excited to have a scholarship finalist in the 2023 class, Miss Roshunda Holt. I will serve as delegate. Rob Tabor will serve as alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee.

Our convention will be held in the air capital of the world, beautiful Wichita, Kansas, November 3-5. At this time our national representative has not been assigned. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Kansas.

Will Louisiana, Maine, and Maryland please move to the microphones.

We will now move to Kentucky!

SPEAKER: Hello! Welcome to everybody from Kentucky. A lot of you I know are on here virtually and we are excited that you're still here. I would first like to say thank you in particular to this administration and to Pam Allen. As you all know, over the past year our state has been hit over and over and over again with weather-related natural disasters, and Pam has never once failed to text me or call me or email me and check on us. As well as other members of the administration.

[Applause]

We are excited to bring with us one Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner and two state scholarship winners are joining us.

At the end of July we will be hosting BELL in a new location with a new coordinator and a bunch of new volunteers who are very, very enthusiastic and are not me. So yea. Although I'll miss it.

Our convention this year will be held on October 6-7 in the city of Louisville. I will serve as the delegate and Sandra Williams will serve as the alternate. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Kentucky.

Louisiana!

[Applause]

PAM ALLEN: Hello, President Riccobono! And my Federation family! I am Pam Allen, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana! Home of the LSU women's basketball champions and college World Series champions. We know how to fight and win in Louisiana.

In addition to our outstanding affiliate members and our delegation, including over 30 first time attendees, I am proud to say that we have our staff and students from the Louisiana Center for the Blind!

[Applause]

We are also honored to have with us Joanne Wilson, founder of the Louisiana Center for the Blind, and President emeritus of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana.

Since 1985, thousands of our Louisiana Center for the Blind students of all ages have learned that blindness does not stop them from pursuing their dreams and living the lives they want. I am so grateful for the many ways they are giving back by being part of the National Federation of the Blind leading at every level of our organization and in their communities, careers, and families.

We also have in our delegation the staff and graduate students from our institute on blindness at Louisiana tech university!

[Applause]

We are excited to have with us our state scholarship winner Lindsay Adair, and we also give a shoutout to national scholarship winners and LCB graduates Trisha Kilkearney and Nina.

We are thrilled to have recently hosted our BELL Academy and soon with 20 BELL ringers and also very proud to recognize who our BELL coordinator, Krystal Guillory, who was named as the 2023 distinguished educator of blind students!

[Applause]

I want to extend a special greeting to everyone attending their first convention, and let's hear it from all those here for the first time!

[Applause]

Thanks for a great rookie round up and thanks to our Jernigan fund committee and everyone who helped welcome our first timers. Please stop by our delegation and find me by our flag or check in our great Texas hospitality suite to pick up a ribbon if you did not receive one.

I will be the delegate and serve on the nominating committee. Treva Olivero will be the alternate. Our state convention will be October 19-21 at the Crowne Plaza in Baton Rouge. Thank you, Texas, for an awesome convention.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much Louisiana.

Let's move to Maine.

SPEAKER: Good morning. I am Mark Tardif, the President of the Maine affiliate. We have here two young scholarship finalists, two very bright young men, Noah Carver and Ryan Mentor.

[Applause]

Yes. Very proud of them. And we are the land of blueberries and the land of the best lobster on God's green earth, let me tell ya. Glad to be here. I believe Noah is a first timer. But we have a bunch of people who are listening virtually.

I will be the delegate and David Hutchins will be the alternate. We have our convention in Brunswick, Maine, on September 23 at the Adaptive Outdoor Education Center. It's promising to be a good one. And I would like to invite everybody. We don't have a national rep yet. However, we would very much like it if we could have Shawn Calloway. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Maine.

Will Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Missouri please get to microphones. We will now move to Maryland!

[Applause]

RONZA OTHMAN: Good morning, Mr. President and fellow Federationists from the great state of Maryland!

[Applause]

We are the home of delicious steamed blue crab and equally important Old Bay seasoning where we like to put Old Bay on our Old Bay!

I am Ronza Othman. I use she/her pronouns. And I have the privilege of serving as the President of this great and wonderful affiliate!

[Applause]

We are the home of the headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind!

[Applause]

We are the home of many of our members of our unparalleled staff at our headquarters, most of whom are here with us today! We are the home of our fantastic national President Mark Riccobono!

[Applause]

We are the home of our wonderful immediate past President Marc Maurer! We are the home of three unparalleled first ladies all of whom are leaders in their own rights, Melissa Riccobono, Pat Maurer, and Mary Ellen Jernigan!

[Applause]

We are also the home of a long time Federation leader and visionary Sharon Maneki!

Now, I need your help, my Federation family. Sharon was unable to be with us today and this week in person due to illness. She has attended convention every single year since 1977 and she is listening on the stream. So how about a huge Federation show of appreciation and love for Sharon!

[Applause]

We love you and can't wait to see you in Florida!

I am delighted to share that we also have with us today the founder of the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children Barbara Cheadle!

[Applause]

We have with us President of blind industries and service of Maryland who is a past NFB of Maryland President Dr. Michael Goss!

[Applause]

We have the director of program services of BISM Andy MacGyver and a chapter President in Maryland Matt Yinuzi with us!

[Applause]

We have all of the students and staff of BISM's STAR program!

[Applause]

We have many of the staff and students from the BISM SAIL program. And we are delighted to have with us the assistant director of the office of blindness and vision services, Tandra Hunter Payne!

We also have with us more than three dozen first time convention attendees!

[Applause]

We have several members of the Maryland nearing the gap program which certifies teachers of blind students! They just graduated this past May!

We have two Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winners and we are thrilled to have a national finalist Tyler Hopi!

We have three state scholarship finalists!

We are the home of the first BELL Academy and I am delighted to share that the BELLs will toll loudly this year with three BELL Academies in Maryland!

Southern Maryland for the first time in partnership with the Maryland School for the Blind July 17-21, Baltimore BELL Academy August 7-18, and the Salisbury BELL X Academy in partnership with Blind Industries and Services of Maryland August 7-11.

We have gotten it done at the Maryland General Assembly this year and had two bills pass, both as a result of our collective action and advocacy. Landlords can no longer discriminate against guide dog owners once their guide dogs retire! And any person in the state of Maryland can go to any pharmacy in the state of Maryland and get their prescriptions in accessible format in Braille, large print, or audio!

[Applause]

As you can tell, we are truly living the lives we want in Maryland.

Now, President Riccobono, before you kick me off, I am the delegate. Our First Vice President Debbie Brown is the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our convention will be November 10-12 at the Delta Hotel by Marriott in Hunt Valley, Maryland. We do not yet have a national representative.

And that is my report! Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Maryland. I would encourage you to get back to the PAC table now.

[Laughter]

Massachusetts!

SPEAKER: Good morning! Federation family and President Riccobono, we are so delight the to be here. We're not as big as Maryland. She's always so hard to follow, Miss Ronza. But we are here and we are deep in the heart of the NFB.

And I am Shara Winton, the delegate. I will also be serving on the nominating committee. I am here with my second Vice President, who will be our alternate delegate, Miss Debbie Brown.

We are here with the Massachusetts commission of the blind commissioner John Olivera. And Massachusetts and Boston is always the city of champions even though we may not win every game.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: When is your convention, Massachusetts? Didn't hear ya.

SPEAKER: I have to find the mic again. To be announced.

MARK RICCOBONO: Okay. Okay. Great. Thank you, Massachusetts.

Michigan!

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and National Federation of the Blind! My name is Robert Parsons, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan.

[Applause]

I am so happy to be here and so thankful for this opportunity. I will be serving as our affiliate's delegate. Our second Vice President Mrs. Sabrina Rice will serve as the alternate. We have pledged $150 to the SUN shares, White Cane Fund, Jacobus tenBroek Fund, and Kenneth Jernigan Fund.

We have a total of 34 registered people from our affiliate with 19 in person currently.

[Applause]

Of those 19, that does include six first time attendees. And of those six, we do have one Kenneth Jernigan award winner, Miss Tara Morgan. Congratulations. Those six first timers, we also have our scholarship finalist Miss Felicia Bradford! So we are totally excited and so proud.

Outside of that, our convention for 2023 is still to be announced. And we do not have a national rep but we do have the trusted national office on the board of directors who said she will send us someone great because you always do.

And as far as an update about our affiliate, I will just give a brief update that last weekend, June 23-25, the NFB of Michigan held its first family and youth program post COVID called raising expectations accessing life, REAL. And it was a two-track program. Track one being professional development for high school and above to get people ready to transition to that next step of life. And track two, STEM to you!

We are our first child in Michigan at the age of 7. She loved it. So we thank you so much for the opportunity and we can't wait to get started and bring it back next year. Thank you all.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Michigan.

Minnesota!

SPEAKER: Good morning. This is Steve Jacobson, President of the NFB of Minnesota. We had yesterday 66 people registered. I'm sure we got 4 more people around here somewhere to register to get us up to 70. We've got to keep working on that.

With us is our wonderful adjustment to blindness training center, BLIND, Incorporated, staff and students. And we have some staff with us working on some of our summer programs that aren't with us the whole year, so we're glad to have them here.

We have our two state scholarship winners, our scholarship program named in honor of Joyce and Tom Scanlin. Joyce was a long time President in Minnesota and Vice President of the NFB of Minnesota, and Tom of course was our treasurer for 40 years.

We also have a couple of past state scholarship winners with us as well.

Our current winners where Ben Zang and Elizabeth Rousch. I know we have Logan and Josh here.

[Applause]

We are planning -- oh, we also have two of our teachers of tomorrow with us, Wendy Harris and Amy Coughman, here at their first convention.

We are planning to do an in-person BELL program in August. Briley O'Connor is our BELL coordinator and is working hard on that, August 7-18.

We also have with us several staff members from Minnesota state services for the blind's preemployment transition services unit. We're glad to have them here.

Our state convention will be in Rochester, Minnesota, November 3-5. We do not have a national rep assigned yet.

I will be the delegate. Our alternate is Corbb O'Connor. And I will serve on the nominating committee.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Minnesota.

Let's move to Mississippi.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Good morning, my Federation community. I am Candice Chapman, President of our Mississippi affiliate. And oh, my stars, I am so excited to tell you about our delegation. We have in our delegation five first time convention goers. We also have five students who are participating in the career quest program for this convention. I am told that they are the fabulous five.

We also have in our delegation from the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services director Dorothy Blonde and one of the counselors. I will serve as the delegate gore this convention. Our First Vice President Sharon Perry will serve as the delegate. I will serve on the nominating committee. March 29-31 in Jackson will be our convention. We do not have a hotel yet or a national rep assigned as of yet. That's my report.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Mississippi.

[Applause]

Will Montana, Nebraska, and Nevada please move to microphones?

We will now move to Missouri!

SPEAKER: Good morning, Mr. President and fellow Federationists. I'm Sheila Wright, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. We're proud to have with us our state scholarship winner Isaac McBurny and in our delegation we're always proud to have our President emeritus and editor of the Braille Monitor Gary Wender.

[Applause]

I will serve as the delegate. Jenny Carmack, our First Vice President, is the second. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our state convention will be April 11-14 of 2024 in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Hilton Airport, the home of Kansas City Chiefs!

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Missouri. I would like to now acknowledge Sandy.

SPEAKER: Mr. President, I am happy to tell that you our sun is shining everywhere in this room. However, we need more of it. We need a lot of it for our Kenneth Jernigan Fund to make it possible for this committee to bring more than 94 people next year to Florida. We also need help with or support for our wonderful facility, our headquarters in Baltimore, through the tenBroek Fund. And we all know that we could not do nearly as much as we do if we didn't have contributions to our White Cane Fund.

Now, we also know that AIRA has agreed to match up to $25,000. There are two people who have made it possible for us to reach a goal, last I knew, and I hope it's changed for the good, but last I knew, we were at $20,512. Let's work really hard to get it over $25,000 because we all know that without it, we cannot do what we need to do.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: All right. Take your opportunity to GIVE 20 and support the work that we do. And you also might get a chance to go to our 2024 convention because of it.

Let's now move to Montana!

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono, and fellow Federationists. This is Jim Marks, President of the NFB of Montana. Greetings from big sky country.

Things are going well in Montana. We're growing the affiliate, we have a new chapter, half of our delegation is new and we have a bunch of people listening from home virtually.

I will serve as the delegate. Our treasurer, Reggie Herbert, serves as our alternate. I'll be on the nominations committee. And our state convention is October 6-7 in Helena, Montana at the Holiday Inn.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Montana!

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

Let's move to Nebraska!

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Greetings? That is my Nebraska family you hear. And I welcome 82 of our Nebraska family to this convention!

[Applause]

In our delegation, we are honored to have 23 staff from the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and visually impaired.

[Applause]

That includes the Executive Director Carlos Servan and the supervisor of the Nebraska center for the blind Jessica Bartonvok.

We also have 27 of the students, parents, and staff of our working gain experience in the summer program.

We are honored to have a 2023 national scholarship finalist Mora Loberg. And I am still in the process of adopting Jack Freeberg from South Dakota, a finalist who has chosen to go to Indiana but, Ron, we talked about this. School has not started yet. So I still have a little time to convince him to come to Nebraska.

My name is Jamie Richey, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, and I will serve as the delegate.

The alternate delegate is Mr. Shane Buresh. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our convention will be in either March or April of 2024 in, wait for it, Nebraska. And there will be more details to come. Thank you.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Nebraska.

Let's move to Nevada.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and distinguished delegations. My name is Mark Tadder. I will be the delegate. Mona Coker will be the alternate. I am the new President.

We were able to keep our accessible digital voting system this year as well as expanding our in person voting machines and keeping states from flipping back to paper-only ballots.

[Applause]

We have two Jernigan winners and we also are proud to be one of the fastest growing affiliates in the nation, including a chapter that's very near area 51. So if you have any questions, we've got your answers.

Our convention will be on November 10-12 at the Sparks Nugget and resort in Sparks, Nevada. And we also have contributions for $200 to each of the four funds, Jernigan, tenBroek, white cane, and SUN Funds. And that's my report.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Nevada.

We appreciate the contributions from affiliates. Remember, we don't need to know your contributions in your line up, but we do appreciate them very much.

New Hampshire.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono. My name is Deanna O'Brien, affiliate President of New Hampshire.

I will be the delegate. My alternate is Carolyn Corrigan, my secretary. I will serve on the nominating committee.

We have a first time attendee with us today. We also have a past scholarship member from last year, Abbey Duffy.

Our convention is in September 2023 and it is the 23rd of September and it will be held in Concord. We do not have a national rep. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, New Hampshire.

New Jersey!

SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. President. New Jersey has entered the chat! My name is Lia Stone. My pronouns are she/her and I'm the first vice president of the New Jersey affiliate. I am honored to be serving as the delegate this year on behalf of our President, Linda Melendez who is back home fighting breast cancer the way we know how to fight in New Jersey. If you are unfamiliar, the Sopranos have audio description now so you can educate yourself.

We have been working hard in New Jersey over the past year to help blind New Jersians to live the lives we want. We have been fighting for and have successfully passed through our state assembly the accessible vote by mail bill. We have had some push back, a 700 page report from a group that shall not be named think they can stop us but we are far stronger than they will be.

We have our BELL Academy coming up in August as well as STEM to you. I am so excited that our delegation this year has a whole mess of first timers including four Jernigan scholarship winner he's. Our teacher of tomorrow, Sara. Our 2022 state scholarship winner and newly elected President of the National Association of Blind Students, Lauren. Our state convention will be November 9-12 at the Crowne Plaza in Edison. We do not yet have a national rep assigned.

I will be serving on the nominating committee and our treasurer Annemarie Cooke will be the delegate.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, New Jersey.

New Mexico?

SPEAKER: Good morning Federation family, President Riccobono, and members of the board of directors.

My name is Tara Chavez, currently serving as the affiliate President of the great state of the land of NFB enchantment in the great state of... say it, guys. There you are. New Mexico. I didn't warn them before I said that, see? That's because I'm trying to see if they're paying attention.

I am serving this year as our delegate. Our First Vice President Adelmo Vigil is our alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. And our state convention 2023 will be September 21-24 at the Embassy Suites in Albuquerque. And fun fact, we are hoping to potential move for 2024. So we'll see.

Some fun things happening in the great state of New Mexico. We've finished our BELL Academy not even 2 weeks ago. June 23, we had nine BELL ringers this year in Albuquerque. We had a partnership are the New Mexico school for the blind and visually impaired. They provided us our venue. But the New Mexico Commission for the Blind sponsored our BELL Academy so yes so grateful for that partnership.

Speaking of that, we have in our delegation our Executive Director, Greg, from the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, our director of our orientation center Jamie Simpson. We have staff from the New Mexico Commission for the Blind. Several members of our staff. And students from the orientation center. We have several first time attendees. I think I counted around 20. We have five humans, four Jernigan scholarship winners in our delegation.

We also have our at large chapter in the delegation, including the President Janet Montoya, who happens to be one of our Jernigan scholarships.

Let's see if I forgot anything.

I am very proud to serve as the delegate, as I said, and I'm already going to serve on the nominating committee. So I think -- I don't think I missed anything, so I am finished with my report. Thank you, everyone.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, New Mexico.

SPEAKER: Oh, I did forget something. I apologize. Really quickly. New Mexico is not having a table in the exhibit hall. We are selling raffle tickets for an iPhone 14 Pro.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, New Mexico. We have a number of affiliates to get through so I would encourage the delegates to recognize the alphabet goes to W.

New York.

[Applause]

SPEAKER: Good morning, fellow Federationists! This is your delegate in New York Chancey Fleet! Our President, Mike Robinson, unable to be with us this week. He sends his regards and I just want to thank everybody on our affiliate team our delegation for supporting me and taking on this role as delegate for the first time. It's been really great and I couldn't have done it without y'all. Thank you.

I do want to say that we are so sad to mark the occasion of our first convention without the presence either in person or virtually of our beloved long time reader and mentor and past President Karl Jacobson who is survived by his wife Mindy. We're all thinking of him today.

[Applause]

We by a conservative estimate, we have at a minimum seven first timers in our delegation this year. And we've got some exciting stuff coming up. Let me skip around a bit. We have some congratulations which are in order. We would like to congratulate our scholarship winner Noah Carver. We would also like to steal him from Maine. We would like to congratulate Nina Moranka for stepping up and becoming our state treasurer this year. And we would like to welcome with love and congratulate Don Coleman-Penson. Dawn is a Jernigan scholarship recipient this year, here with her son.

We have an exciting summer ahead. Our fabulous Heather Byrd is coordinating a BELL Academy coming up. We have a half dozen BELL ringers so far and Heather is still taking registrations.

We would like to thank our STEM to you coordinator who will be spearheading a down state STEM to you academy. New York City isn't known for having a lot of space but we'll be exploring outer space with our blind youth. So thanks to Danielle.

I must inform you that the location for our national, our state convention rather, has been announced. We've chosen Albany. Our dates are to be determined so of course it follows that we don't yet have a national rep. I will serve as delegate and on the nominating committee. And our intrepid Cayte Mendez, First Vice President, who you may have heard of, will be the alternate. Thank you so much.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, New York.

North Carolina.

SPEAKER: Good morning, everybody. North Carolina is very excited. We have over 70 people registered here this week. We have 30 first timers. We have 11 Jernigan scholarship winners. And we're very, very proud of our scholarship finalist Avery Celine. And I'm Sharon Weddington, the delegate. I am the President of North Carolina. Our alternate will be our second Vice President, Marlon Stover. I will also serve on the nominating committee. Our convention is going to be September 14-17 in Burlington, North Carolina. And it will be at the Best Western Hotel and we do not have a rep at this time.

Thank you very much.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, North Carolina.

North Dakota.

SPEAKER: Good morning. I am a new President for North Dakota. My name is Angelita Martinez. I will be serving on the nominating committee and as the delegate. Our alternate will be Minuka Rai. Our convention will be in Bismark, North Dakota, in October. We do not have a rep. I would like to recognize our members both online and in person and I think that I can say what maybe no other affiliate can say here, that we have 100% attendance at NFB '23 this year.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, North Dakota.

Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania please move to a microphone.

Ohio.

SPEAKER: Greetings, President Riccobono, members of the national board, my fellow Federationists. My name is Richard Payne, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio. I am so proud to be here at this convention. We have been trying to get to Houston for a while. I'm excited.

Mr. President, I made a promise to the membership last year, especially to Ohio, that the next time I was at this mic I would have an opportunity to let you know that our parents in the state of Ohio would be protected by our parental rights bill. I am happy to say that Governor DeWine signed that bill April 3 this year.

[Applause]

It is now law in the state of Ohio. I am happy to say that our STEM to you program was in May. Very successful program. I would like to thank those who participated and those who led that program.

I would also like to say that we have a national scholarship winner, Trisha.

[Applause]

We have combined together 15 first timers and Kenneth Jernigan winner. A host of Federationists that have come to this convention long term. And new members.

Mr. President, our convention will be November 17-19 in Columbus, Ohio, at the DoubleTree. And we do not have a national rep, but I would like to respectfully request Norma Crosby. I will serve on the nominating committee as the delegate. Our Vice President Dr. Carolyn Peters will serve as the alternate delegate, sir. That is my report.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Ohio.

Oklahoma!

SPEAKER: Good morning National Federation of the Blind! Welcome to convention 2023! If you are new, welcome home.

All right. I am the delegate. I am the affiliate President Sanho Steele-Louchart. Our alternate delegate is our First Vice President Audrey Farnum. She says if it is good enough for Captain Kirk, it is good enough for her.

We are proud to announce that we have amongst us a national finalist. We have Theresa Mendez Booz.

[Applause]

I will quickly tell everyone that over the more than 100 interactions I've had with Theresa, I have walked away from every one of them feeling better about life and humanity. I strongly encourage a conversation.

But we also have two Kenneth Jernigan winners, one of whom is our legislative director. And finally we have three state-level winners. Thank you all.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Oklahoma.

Oregon.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and fellow Federationists! I will make this quick so we can go to lunch. I am Carla McQuillan, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon. I will serve as the delegate. Our alternate delegate is Stephanie McGary, who will be the nominating committee. Our state convention will be held in Eugene on the 6th through 8th of October. We have in our delegation -- oh, we don't have a rep. We have in our delegation today Justin Harford. And we have one Jernigan scholarship winner here as well.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Oregon.

Will Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and South Dakota, please move to microphones.

We will now move to Pennsylvania.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and fellow Federationists. My name is Lynn Heitz and I have the honor and privilege to be the President of NFB Pennsylvania, the birth place of this awesome organization.

We have 10 first time convention goers in our delegation this year. We have two national scholarship winners, Ashley Rogers and Joanne Kim. And we also claim Tyler Hobby because he will be attending Pennsylvania state university.

We are also the home of the NFC champions Philadelphia Eagles and the National League champion Philadelphia Phillies.

Our convention will be November 9-12 at the Holiday Inn capital in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I will serve as the delegate. Michelle Bernetskie is our alternate. And I will serve on the nominating committee.

We have not been assigned a national rep and we would like to request Anil Lewis. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Pennsylvania.

Puerto Rico.

SPEAKER: Good morning, President Riccobono and Federation family. One day I promise you will get to hear my real voice but for now my name is Shalmarie Arroyo Mercado, President of the Puerto Rico affiliate. And last year we had two people in our delegation. This year we have 10. And all the rest of the Puerto Ricans living across all the states. So shoutout to all of them.

We have a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship, Kimberly. We also have a scholarship finalist for 2023, Eddie. And we have in our delegation the named blind educator for the year, Tomas Cintron.

[Applause]

Sorry. I am the delegate. Our treasurer Ana Cintron, is our alternate. Our convention will be in our beautiful island on December 1-3. So if anybody wants to escape the cold weather, you can go to our beautiful warm beach hotel in December. And it's going to be in the Courtyard by Marriott. And I'll be participating on the nominating committee.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Puerto Rico.

Rhode Island.

GRACE PIRES: Good morning, Mr. President and fellow Federationists. I am Grace Pires President of the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island. This year in our delegation, we have one Kenneth Jernigan scholarship winner. I will be serving on the nominating committee. I am the delegate. Rui Cabral will be the alternate. Our convention is November 10-11 at the Crowne Plaza hotel. We do not have a rep assigned yet. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Rhode Island.

We will now move to South Carolina.

SPEAKER: Good morning, fellow Federationists. I am Marty McKenzie, the current President of the National Federation of the Blind of South Carolina. Thank you to the enthusiastic delegation there.

We are a beautiful state where you can drive from the homes of Parnell Diggs in beautiful Myrtle Beach to the mountains of Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center of the Blind.

We have in our delegation today Nikki from the South Carolina Commission for the Blind who is recruiting for positions that are available at the commission. We welcome her.

We have three Jernigan scholarships. There was a fourth but medical issues prevented her from being present.

Our convention will take place August 17-20, really beginning early the morning on the 18th in Columbia, South Carolina, at the Embassy Suites.

At this time we do not have a national rep assigned. I will serve as the delegate and will serve on the nominating committee. Lenora Robertson, our First Vice President, will serve as the alternate delegate.

We also have our entire executive board present and many of our state board members. Thank you, sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, South Carolina.

Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Vermont, please move to microphones.

We will now move to South Dakota:

SPEAKER: Hello, this is Mike Klimisch. We are rushing because we have a scholarship winner who is Jack Freeberg. Our affiliate has been enjoying NEWSLINE since we had it for a year now so we're enjoying that. I'm still kind of recovering from a stroke that I had about a year and a half ago so that's why I was not at convention last year. But I'm doing well as I can. I walk very slow now with a walker but I'm able to make it good.

[Applause]

Thank you. Thank you.

Our affiliate is sending 600 for the national funds. All four funds. I will be the delegate, as we have no alternate delegate. Our convention, we're still working on a date, but we're planning for April of next year. No exact day has been finalized, but it will be at the Rushmore Inn and Suites.

I think I gave everything. If you need more, let me know.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, South Dakota and welcome back.

Tennessee.

SPEAKER: Federation family, my name is James Brown, how is everybody feeling?

So the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee had a BELL program. We had 25 BELL ringers this year. We also had the Vanderbilt life light paramedics land in the middle of our BELL program and the BELL students got to go in and explore the nice helicopter and talk to the paramedics, which was cool.

We sent Colorado state President Jessica Beecham to Colorado. You're welcome. We've also sent Cheryl Whitman to Mass. You're welcome.

I will be the delegate. Our alternate will be Christina Clift. I will serve on the nominating committee. We will have details from our convention coming soon.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Tennessee.

Texas!

[Applause]

NORMA CROSBY: You know, I've been hearing everybody brag and we don't do that in Texas. I'm not going to brag. But I am going to tell ya that we have with us today two scholarship winners, Marco and Cameron. We have agency staff and customers from the Texas Workforce Commission VR program. We have more than 350 proud Texas Federationists.

[Applause]

And we have three former Presidents of the NFB of Texas with us, Angela, Kimberly, and Glen.

So I'm very proud of our delegation, as you can tell but I want to try to hurry because my friend Marci Carpenter always wants us to hurry up and get to the Ws.

So I will serve as the delegate. Raul Gallegos will serve as the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our affiliate convention is on the weekend of November 3-5 at the DoubleTree here in Houston, Texas. And I think that's my report, sir.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Texas.

Looks like you got 380 registered right now. So maybe you can get to 400 before we're done.

Let's move to Utah.

EVERETTE BACON: Thank you, Mr. President. It's always lucky and a little bit unlucky to follow Texas. But it's a pleasure to be here. Utah is excited that we have three brand new people that's our first time to the convention.

We do want you to keep one of our members in your prayers. One of our new members ended up in the hospital last night. So we just want you to keep her in your thoughts.

We're really excited to have a scholarship winner, Zachary, from Utah. Or a finalist, I should say. And I want to also say that we are really excited to have one of our teachers of tomorrow here as well. And NFB Utah just graduated 11 BELL ringers just last week. Our director of our BELL Academy is here with us. This is his 45th convention. Our convention will be scheduled for April 11-14 in the year 2024. I will serve as the delegate and on the nominating committee. And our treasurer Mark Turley will serve as the alternate. Thank you, Mr. President.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Utah.

Will Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin please move to microphones. We will now move to Vermont.

SPEAKER: Greetings, fellow Federationists from the green mountain state, home of Ben and Jerry's, Vermont teddy bear, and our lake monster champ.

This past year we've been working on a parent rights bill and the electronic return bill which was declined but we are going to be fighting as soon as our legislative session begins in January.

We have a dynamic new youth person as part of our board and she is determined to gather families and youth to our affiliate, and we are excited to have her. And she is starting out with Braille story times in the libraries and reaching out to the youth in our affiliate. So we are very excited to be able to start reaching out in our affiliate and building our affiliate.

I survived my first term as President and was reelected to my second term in May.

[Applause]

It did come at a cost. My first convention in 2018, my photo was taken and I had dark hair. Today I took my picture and it is gray. I am Susan Bellimer, I am the delegate. I will be on the nominating committee. I do not have an alternate this year.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Vermont.

Virginia.

SPEAKER: Greetings from the Commonwealth of Virginia. I am Tracy Soforenco President of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia! I am thrilled we have nine first time convention attendees this year, many of them with the support of the Jernigan scholarship program and our Virginia-specific program.

We have two scholarship finalists. We have with us Virginia department for the blind and vision impaired deputy commissioner Pam Cato and her husband here attending convention for the first time ever and experiencing the power of our Federation convention community including six additional staff members attending!

We have two participants in our preemployment transition program project RISE attending along with two teachers of tomorrow, Jody and Lily.

We just completed our in-person BELL program with 16 participants and have 7 more participating in the in-home edition!

We just completed the third of our silver BELLs program for seniors where we had immersive weekends for 60 seniors connecting them with blindness skills in our positive attitude. We have three of those participants here with us today.

[Applause]

I am proud to share that as of July 1, we have seen the end of subminimum wages in the Commonwealth of Virginia!

[Applause]

I will serve as the delegate and the participant in the nominating committee. Sandy Halverson is our delegate. Our convention is November 3-5 in Williamsburg at the DoubleTree. And we do not have a national rep. Thank you, President Riccobono.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, Virginia.

Washington!

[Applause]

MARCI CARPENTER: Good morning, President Riccobono. My Federation family. I am Marci Carpenter, very honored to be the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington!

And you know, isn't it amazing that the Seattle Mariners are coming all the way to Houston just to play some baseball games at the end of our great convention.

And I am wearing my blue Seattle Mariners hat with the yellow trident.

I will be serving as the delegate. Corey Grandstaff will be the alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee. Our next convention will be March 1-3, 2024, in Vancouver, Washington. You all are welcome to come. And that is my report.

[Applause]

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Washington.

West Virginia!

SPEAKER: Howdy, y'all, as we say from the mountain state of West Virginia. I'm Marcus Soulsby, affiliate President, and please don't dart off to lunch yet. I promise I will not sing this report. Be glad. But I want to say first off, congratulations to our national scholarship finalist. This is the second year in a row that West Virginia has had a finalist. And I can't recall the last time we did that.

And with the field she's in, she promises to bridge the access gap that we have with access in disability. So let's all give her our support.

I am the affiliate President. I am the delegate. And I'm even happier to serve on the nominating committee. The question is, which among the board or their specific designees will be lucky enough to be our national rep on Friday October 13-15th at our state convention to be held at Pope John 23rd Pastoral Center in South Charleston, West Virginia. Don't let Friday the 13th discourage you. You'll be lucky. We would be happy with anyone, but I heard that we might be battling for Bacon among a couple of other states but I heard my best bud Everette Bacon might be interested. We'll see how that goes.

But whoever we have, again, we're just glad to have a breath of Federation fresh air in the mountain state with our mountains and forests.

Thank you, everyone.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you, West Virginia.

Wisconsin.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon, President Riccobono and fellow Federationists. My name is Ben Dallin, affiliate President for the National Federation of the Blind of Wisconsin. The badger state, America's dairy land, and last but not least the original home state of President Mark Riccobono. Welcome to visit any time, sir.

Pleased to be here with our two Jernigan scholarship recipients, Joe and Denise. We also reconstituted, reinstated our state scholarship this year and we have our winner hunter.

We have been busy in Wisconsin during the last year. Like I said, reinstating our scholarship, planning to have a BELL program next year, collaborating with state agencies on accessible electronic voting and other priorities.

I will be serving as the delegate. Our First Vice President Dave Hyde will serve as our alternate. I will serve on the nominating committee.

And last but not least, we will be having a convention in the spring of 2024. The date and location are not yet set but stay tuned for those details coming soon.

Thank you, Mr. President.

MARK RICCOBONO: Thank you very much, Wisconsin!

We're going to get to door prize in a moment. We do not have a delegate from the great state of Wyoming. So I'll report in 51 delegates reporting for the convention.

[Applause]

As of end of business yesterday we have 2,450 people registered in person. So make sure the rest of you get registered. And we are running short on time, so before we get to a door prize, let's have one big Federation cheer!

[Applause]

All right, Bennett, give us a door prize.

SPEAKER: We got a hundred bucks for the end of the morning session! It was really great!

We had a winner and that is Paul Schroeder from Kentucky. Are you here? Stand up. Raise your arms. Because everyone is trying to leave for lunch.

MARK RICCOBONO: We will start promptly at 2:00 p.m. this afternoon with the presidential report.

No Paul?

SPEAKER: Okay. Ryan Kanatzar. Ryan, are you here?

Nope. Next?

Oh, you're here? But you're not Ryan. Okay.

Wendy Graham. From Texas. Are you here?

How about Rhonda Phillips from South Carolina?

We found her. Thank you.

MARK RICCOBONO: All right. We found her. Don't leave. Get your door prize.

We will stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m.

(Gavel pounding).

(Session ended at 12:11 p.m. CT)