For Immediate Release

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri Applauds Governor Parson for Issuing Proclamation Declaring October 15 as White Cane Awareness Day

October is Meet the Blind Month and Blind Missourians Urge a Greater Understanding of the Blind in Society

Kansas City, Missouri (October 12, 2020): The National Federation of the Blind of Missouri applauds Governor Michael L Parson for recently issuing a proclamation declaring October 15 as White Cane Awareness Day. The proclamation serves as a means to acknowledge the usefulness of the White Cane as a “simple yet effective tool of independence that contributes to the self-sufficiency of individuals who are blind and visually impaired and symbolizes their ability to achieve a full and independent life and their capacity to work productively in competitive employment.” The proclamation also encourages “all Missourians to show respect for those who carry the white cane, to honor their many achievements, and to reaffirm our commitment to improving access to basic services and opportunities for persons who are blind and visually impaired.” In addition, the Governor’s Proclamation recognizes the prominent role of the National Federation of the Blind in bringing about public understanding of the blind by establishing “the annual observance of ‘White Cane Awareness Day,” ’ which “emphasizes the need for all Americans to be aware of the presence of persons with disabilities in our communities and to work together to keep the streets, highways, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings, facilities, and places of public accommodation, amusement, and resort safe and functional to the disability community.”

Though the National Federation of the Blind works year-round to increase public awareness about issues affecting the blind, it is during October that we put forth an extra effort. October is Meet the Blind Month, a time when members of the National Federation of the Blind go into our communities to spread the message that blindness does not hold us back from living rewarding and productive lives. Due to COVID19 restrictions, this year’s Meet the Blind Month will be implemented in a socially distant and virtual manner, but the message will still be the same. Blind people from across the political spectrum will also make their voices heard this fall whether they vote in-person or vote absentee. The importance of blind voters participating in our Blind Voter Survey to report good or bad voting experiences cannot be overemphasized. The National Federation of the Blind will use this data to approach elected officials to make the voting process more accessible for the blind. The Help America Vote Act provides for an accessible voting machine at every precinct during federal elections. The National Federation of the Blind of Missouri is thus working hard to persuade the legislature to have accessible voting machines at every polling place in local and state elections as well. We are also working with election officials to ensure that in future elections, blind people will be able to preserve their right to independently cast a secret ballot if they choose to vote absentee.

Since our founding in 1940, the National Federation of the Blind has been a leading force in promoting independence for blind people. In the 1960’s and 1970’s the National Federation of the Blind helped obtain passage, in all 50 states, of White Cane Safety Laws, which removed barriers to blind people living independently. More recently, the NFB tackled the issue of quiet cars by successfully helping to pass the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, signed into law on January 4, 2011. In 2017 the National Federation of the Blind established a monitoring program to ensure that dog guide users are not denied service by rideshare companies such as Uber and Lyft. The NFB is also working with automobile manufacturers and elected officials to ensure that blind people get access to fully autonomous vehicles once they become available in the market.

“Over the past 80 years, the National Federation of the Blind has been the most successful organization working to improve the lives of blind people,” said Shelia Wright, president of the Missouri affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. “The many legislative, legal, and advocacy milestones which we have achieved were the result of blind and sighted volunteers willing to take action to accomplish the Federation’s goals of equality, opportunity, and security for the blind. Our continued success depends on more people coming forward and volunteering their time, energy, and talent. We invite you to visit our website [www.nfbmo.org](http://www.nfbmo.org) to learn more about our programs and to find the nearest chapter. Your involvement in the NFB will benefit you in many ways and you will certainly get out of the experience more than you put into it.”

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About the National Federation of the Blind

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), headquartered in Baltimore, is the oldest, largest, and most effective nationwide civil rights and self-advocacy organization of blind Americans. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The National Federation of the Blind seeks to achieve the complete integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality. To accomplish this objective, our programs aim to remove legal, economic, and social barriers and to educate the public to new concepts concerning blindness. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. We can live the lives we want; blindness is not what holds us back. You can learn more about the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri by visiting our website: [www.nfbmo.org](http://www.nfbmo.org)

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