



Dear Fellow Funeral Service Regulators, Educators and Licensees:

It is my privilege to welcome you to Houston, one of Texas' and America's great cities. While you are here, I hope you take the opportunity to interact with colleagues, rekindle friendships and, most importantly, benefit from the many presentations designed to assist in your professional growth. At the end of the Annual Meeting, I hope you will join us for a tour of The National Museum of Funeral History, a truly one-of-a-kind museum dedicated to the cultural heritage of the funeral service industry and its time-honored tradition of compassion. And, don't miss the opportunity to eat at one of the many fine restaurants Houston has to offer.

The year 2021 was one which posed many unique challenges to all of us. Many of us adapted to a new working environment, working remotely, attending countless "Zoom" meetings and creating new ways of fulfilling our respective missions. The Conference was no different. Our 2021 Annual Meeting was our first completely virtual meeting, with record attendance and participation. Representatives of regulatory boards and agencies from 36 jurisdictions participated in two days of well prepared and well received presentations. Our 2022 meeting will be our first hybrid meeting, allowing for in person attendance as well as a virtual opportunity later in March.

Despite the many challenges of 2021, the Conference staff and board continued to work to fulfill its mission. Changes were made to benefit candidates for licensure, such as allowing candidates to opt to share pass/fail data directly with their educational institution and revising the policy to allow the NBE to be retaken every 30 days. In preparing for updates to the NBE, the Conference completed a textbook survey, initiated a new Job/Task Analysis survey and solicited volunteers from across the country to sit on the Exam Committee. Virtual meetings of the Exam Committee have made it easier for members to participate in item writing, allowing greater participation of licensees from varying backgrounds.

In addition to efforts to update the NBE, the Conference has held meetings with our partners in funeral service, meeting both in person and virtually, with the American Board of Funeral Service Education; the National Funeral Directors Association, and the Funeral Service Association of Canada. These opportunities to meet and liaise with our fellow funeral service professionals help to strengthen the bonds which are necessary for all of us to further our mission. We appreciate our relationship with each of these organizations and welcome their representatives to our Annual Meeting.

As I conclude my term as President of the Conference, I wish to thank the Conference staff, all of whom work tirelessly and never lose sight of our purpose. Also, I wish to thank the Board members, all volunteers who freely give of their time and talent. Without each of these groups, the mission of the Conference could not be accomplished. Finally, I wish my successor a successful 2022 and look forward to seeing all of you next year in sunny Phoenix, Arizona.

Blair H. Nelsen, President

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