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# Louisiana delegation heads to Democratic National Convention

BY MARK BALLARD | MBALLARD@THEADVOCATE.COM JUL 24, 2016 - 4:05 PM



Frederick Bell, of St. Gabriel and a Louisiana delegate Adam Schultz

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Frederick Bell, of St. Gabriel and a Louisiana delegate to the Democratic National Convention for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton meets her husband, former President Bill Clinton, in Baton Rouge. Photo by Adam Schultz for Hillary for America campaign.

Mark Ballard

Frederick Bell is in Philadelphia this week as the youngest of Louisiana's 59 voting delegates at the Democratic National Convention, largely, he says, because of a lost TV remote.

The 18-year-old, who graduated two months ago from a high school in St. Gabriel, will vote Tuesday to officially make former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton the first female presidential nominee of a major party.

"I'm going to participate in history," he said.

The convention begins at 3 p.m. Monday and will end late Thursday night. On Wednesday, he plans to be in the Wells Fargo Center to see President Barack Obama speak in person.

It was a televised speech by Obama that Bell watched in 2013 – because he couldn't find a way to change the channel – that ended up inspiring him to start making calls and knocking on doors in the unsuccessful campaign to reelect U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu. He then volunteered to work for other Democratic candidates.

Party activists, like Bell, make up the bulk of the state's delegates whose first votes are obligated to Clinton or her rival, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, in ratio with Louisiana's primary election balloting earlier this year. They will join "super delegates," who are mostly elected officials free to vote as they please.

He's happy with Clinton's choice of U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, of Virginia, as her running mate, though Bell would have preferred Sen. Cory Booker, of New Jersey. The choice of Kaine, a policy wonk, showed Bell that Clinton put governing over political concerns of racial and geographic diversity, he said.

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The attendance plans of Louisiana's two leading Democrats – Gov. John Bel Edwards and Congressman Cedric Richmond, of New Orleans – are still kind of loose, largely because of the aftermath of the police shooting of Alton Sterling followed by the ambush murder of two police officers and a sheriff's deputy in Baton Rouge.

Edwards' spokesman Richard Carbo said the governor plans to attend the last officer funeral here on Monday. A memorial service for all three victims is scheduled later in the week.

"I have to look and see, each day, and weigh what's going on here against what's happening at the convention," Richmond said. "Tensions are running very high right now."

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu will co-host a convention event Tuesday, calling on candidates to focus policy on cities and metropolitan areas.

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Coming on the heels of last week's Republican convention, where speakers talked about the dangers facing the country and which turned disruptive at times, Democrats hope to show voters they are reasonable. But internal party bickering Sunday threatened the hoped-for image of calm.

U.S. Rep. Marsha Fudge, of Ohio, was named convention chair after leaked emails from staffers of the Democratic National Committee, which was supposed to be neutral during the primary season, questioned the religious and political leanings of Sanders. DNC Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz was ousted Sunday as the presiding chair over the convention and said she would step down as party head when the convention is over.

Also, Sanders' supporters plan protests, in part demanding an end to the use of super delegates. Nine of the 28 permits issued by the city of Philadelphia are for pro-Sanders demonstrators. The city expects up to 50,000 demonstrators.

One of Sanders' Louisiana delegates, Kyle Green, of Marrero, argued that protesters will demonstrate how to disagree without being disagreeable.

"The convention is a way to show America what you're all about, what you want to do," said Green, in speaking about the difference between the GOP and Democratic conventions. "You want America to see the reason why they should vote for us, not just what you oppose."

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The Sanders-influenced platform is one of the most progressive in decades, he said. It'll include a call for a \$15 minimum wage, equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs, and an effort to help college graduates pay down their student loans.

Green, who raised the \$3,100 in travel and hotels costs through online donations, said he's looking forward to hearing Sanders speak on the first night of the convention. First Lady Michelle Obama also is scheduled to speak Monday night.

The Louisiana delegation is staying at the Doubletree Hotel, a 10-minute walk from Independence Hall, with South Carolina and Pennsylvania representatives, said New Orleans Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, who chairs the Louisiana Democratic Party.

The delegations will kick off each morning with a breakfast, where the day's activities will be discussed and credentials distributed. They also will hear from leading lights of the Democratic Party, including New Jersey Sen. Booker and Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

Part of the hope is to invigorate the party activists to participate in the Nov. 8 election, even though Louisiana has voted for every Republican presidential candidate since 1996.

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Though early polls show GOP nominee Donald Trump leads in Louisiana, Peterson argued that his divisive rhetoric scares some moderate and Republican voters. "We're definitely in play," Peterson said.

Elizabeth Crisp of The Advocate Capitol news bureau contributed to this report.

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