



2019 Membership Assembly President's Address

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ANA President

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Good morning colleagues and members of the ANA family.

I have been attending a combination of the House of Delegates and Membership Assembly for many years now. So, as those of you from out West might say, this is not my first rodeo.

It is, however, my first as President of the American Nurses Association. And I could not be more delighted about the prospect of sharing with you what we have going on at the national level and some of my priorities for my term in office.

But first I want to tell you about a *feeling* that I get from being at Membership Assembly. It is something that has been consistent all along – from the time I first attended this governance meeting as a delegate from North Carolina.

As you know, there is a lot of work we do here to advance our national organization and the profession in partnership with you – the representatives of the constituent and state nurses associations, the individual member division and our organizational affiliates.

One thing I want to call out and celebrate is the wonderful response to our request for policy proposals this year. ANA received more than 60 proposals, and as you see from our agenda, we are discussing timely and relevant issues.

I look forward to robust discussion and debate on these important topics.

This is the necessary work of a modern, successful, forward-looking professional association. That feeling that I'm talking about lies underneath all this. It is the profound sense of commonality, cohesion and unity that arises from our professional experience – and from the challenges that every nurse faces in providing the highest quality of care to their patients.

This is at the very core of our fellowship, our shared purpose, and our determination to do what is right for nurses – and we know that if we do what's right for nurses. We can bring profound and positive change to health care in this country and to the quality of life for people in our communities, our nation and throughout the world.

So, I am proud to salute you as leaders of our noble profession and as leaders of our associations. I think who we are and what we do can best be summed up in the mission of our organization: ***Nurses advancing our profession to improve health for all.***

For 17 consecutive years now, Gallup's annual honesty and ethics poll found that Americans rank nursing as ***the most trusted profession.*** And, once again, in last year's poll, it wasn't even close.

We know why that is.

As we begin this Assembly and the work before us, I encourage us to consider these questions:

What are we going to do with this trust?

How are we going to build on our professional capital to take our profession to new heights?

and

How will we influence the public agenda to improve health care and make the world a better place?

It is on this subject that I tend to let my experience as a burn unit nurse and volunteer firefighter come into play.

Except what I'd like to do is to take some of the terms that are normally associated with destruction and loss – and invert their meaning.

So, when we think about “fanning the flames,” I want us to think about generating a **positive form of heat** that inspires and invigorates and motivates nurses to live out their natural inclination toward *leadership*.

Let's fan those flames.

And when we think about “fully involved” – a term used in firefighting to describe a structure that is headed for total loss – I want us to think of the “total gain” that society will experience when nurse leaders take their rightful positions as leaders.

Let's ensure that nurses become fully involved in leading the way -- toward solving public health challenges and influencing health policy decisions. Fully involved, for example, by joining boards of directors and developing ground-breaking innovations that will help to transform health care to focus on health and wellness, in addition to illness.

As an association, **we can, and we will** continue to fan those flames.

So, with utmost confidence in the natural ability of nurses to step into leadership roles at their places of work, in their profession, and across society-at-large, I have been working on some priority areas for my presidency.

The first is to increase the diversity of nursing.

To be sure, the profession is more diverse – and there are more opportunities for people of minority backgrounds to get into nursing – than it was when I first got into the profession years ago. But our nation is on track to become majority-minority in about 25 years, and the last study I saw found that nurses from minority backgrounds still represent fewer than one in five of those in the RN workforce.

So, we've got a long way to go. And I would like to see ANA step up its leadership role in bringing more diversity to nursing.

Why is this so essential? The answer is simple – because it means higher quality care for patients. And that, of course, is at the very **core of our mission**.

I also believe that a more diverse nursing workforce would be more effective in helping our society address the growing racial disparities in health care and health outcomes.

Accordingly, we will be fostering efforts to increase the diversity of nursing, intensifying our efforts to collaborate with diverse organizations of nurses and striving to increase participation in ANA by nurses spanning culture, race, religion, creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, experience or any aspect of identity.

Nursing and ANA need to better represent the diverse populations of patients.

One thing we should be doing – and we will try harder to do in the days ahead – is to work more collaboratively with nursing organizations formed to represent minority and ethnic nurses that, frankly, were established because their members felt that ANA was not serving their interests. Although some may still feel this way, we are opening up new dialogue with many of these organizations.

For example, at this Membership Assembly, I am pleased to welcome leaders of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, our newest organizational affiliate. Also joining us as special guests are leaders from the National Association of Hispanic Nurses and Chi Eta Phi.

I personally believe we can make major strides toward increasing diversity and inclusion by reaching out to these organizations. Not only with programming ideas or participating in their events, but also doing some real relationship-building based on frank and open dialogue. Our goal should be to create a baseline of understanding that we all need each other – that we are attuned to each other's issues – and that we are strongest and most effective when we follow our instincts to work collaboratively.

One great avenue we have for beginning these conversations is by accessing the important connections and relationships we have with those who have participated in ANA's Minority Fellowship Program, which is marking its 45th anniversary this year.

We **can, and we will** build on these efforts to increase the diversity of nursing.

The second of my priorities is to increase the relevance of ANA to nurses— especially nurses on the frontlines – so that we can continue to grow our membership.

I think it begins with invigorating the activities and programs that are at the very heart of what a professional association is supposed to do. And that is to connect our members with each other, and through those connections, learn from one another, develop their own skills and opportunities, and join together to make the profession better.

We are, after all, one big knowledge community. There is much we can share and much we can learn.

As you may know, we are focused on establishing ANA as the professional home for all nurses across their career span. As part of that positioning, we have identified a segmentation strategy to guide the development of targeted products, services and engagement opportunities. This includes online communities to foster networking and discussion.

For example, our **Early Career segment** targets those who have received their RN license in the past four years, an **Up and Comers segment** is for those with a little more experience who are beginning to think about becoming leaders in the profession, and an **ANA Nursing Leaders segment** is for nurse executives, APRNs and nursing educators to connect with their peers and discuss how to *mentor* the next generation of nurses and help them adjust to the changing world of health care.

We keep learning about what resonates with each of these segments and refining our programming. For example, we just completed our spring series of webinars. There's one for each of the three segments -- and we had almost 60,000 total registrants with the majority of registrants being prospective members.

We have also developed a **mentorship program** as a way to provide value and opportunity to early career nurses and those who are more seasoned and looking to give back.

Our first year of the mentorship program was wonderfully successful. Building on that, we are aiming to double the number of participants in the program this year.

Additionally, we seek other ways to strengthen the connections we have with our members. It is our job to be attuned to emerging and persistent issues in the profession, to speak out forcefully when the situation calls for it, and to provide our members with a platform to make their views known to society-at-large.

One example is ANA's stepped-up effort to address **workplace violence**.

We already know from studies that nurses are especially susceptible to violent assault by a patient or family member, or bullying by a peer or supervisor, while performing their jobs. So, we launched the #EndNurseAbuse campaign to promote zero-tolerance policies for abuse against nurses and the reporting of such abuse.

As you likely know, we are also actively supporting legislation that would require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop standards mandating health care and social service employers to write and implement a workplace violence prevention plan.

We are also working to develop and share resources and tools to help nurses make their work environments safer. One example is a tip card that will be disseminated widely. We have copies on hand for you while you are here.

I would note that we have added sexual harassment as an element of this campaign and, a few months ago, we officially joined the **TIME'S UP** healthcare movement.

Their goal, which is to unify national efforts to bring safety, equality and dignity to our healthcare work environments, aligns with our goals.

Working together, **we can, and we will** End Nurse Abuse.

My third priority is for ANA to increase nurses' engagement with consumers and, through that, elevate consumers' understanding of the value of nursing.

This is not a new objective for the association. For the past quarter century, ANA has sponsored and promoted **National Nurses Week** in May of each year. This has been an opportunity to build awareness among the public about nurses' contributions to a healthier society and a better world.

Just a couple of months ago, we "upped the ante" with our launch of the **Nursing Now USA** campaign. This is our American edition of the International Council of Nurses and World Health Organization's global campaign to improve health and health care by highlighting the impact of nurses on patients, families and communities at all levels. We see this campaign as a way to involve the wider public in understanding and developing solutions for the critical issues affecting the nursing profession, such as workplace violence, pay equity, staffing shortages, and barriers to practice.

Along the same lines, the World Health Assembly has officially designated 2020 as the "**Year of the Nurse and the Midwife**" in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

Additionally, it's important for us to remember that our Grand Challenge is called Healthy Nurse, **Healthy Nation**. We have made great strides in engaging individual nurses and hundreds of organizations to participate in this program. In fact, earlier this week we reached a major milestone in the growth of this program. By working together, we now have more than 100 thousand participants in the program. I'm sure you'll agree that is something to celebrate! As the momentum continues, I **know** we will see the positive impact on consumers.

These efforts offer abundant opportunities to leverage the trust that our profession has built with consumers and help more people recognize our role as leaders in transforming health care for the better – and to support us as we undertake that mission.

Through all of this work, **we can, and we will** elevate consumers' understanding of the value of nursing.

Finally, let's talk about advocacy for a moment.

This is my fourth priority – to bolster the capabilities within our ranks about how to practice and engage in public advocacy at all levels.

You know, there is an old saying about the three types of people: those who are in the loop, those who are out of the loop, and those who don't even know there is a loop.

Our goal as an organization should be to *own* the loop.

And that, indeed, is what ANA tries to do every day and every way at all levels. You do it in your communities and in the state capitals. Together, we do it here in Washington.

I know that on this issue I am preaching to the converted – given that yesterday most of you were up on Capitol Hill doing precisely what I am talking about.

I truly believe it is a natural tendency of nurses to want to change things for the better.

As we head into 2020 and the celebration of Florence Nightingale's bicentennial, we will reflect on the many wise and provocative things she said, including:

“Were there none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach anything better.”

We trace our roots as an organization to leaders who were discontented and envisioned a better way. **That is who we are as nurse leaders.**

Sometimes it's about fixing what's broken. Sometimes it's about righting wrongs.

But the bottom line is that when there is a crisis or issue to be resolved, we step up.

Our goal should be to help nurses develop their natural skills and become effective public advocates. It will benefit them. It will benefit their communities. And it will enhance ANA's influence and impact across the board.

So, I want to *fan those flames of leadership*. I want to issue a challenge to you, as nurse leaders, to step up and become more *fully involved* in advancing our mission and achieving our vision of a healthier, more equitable society and a better, safer world for all.

Whatever I can do to help you become more effective leaders – whatever I can do to *ignite your passion* for seizing opportunities and leading the way to solutions – I want you to tell me about it.

We can, and we will lead our profession and our society to find these solutions.

I leave you with this: Don't stand still. Let's stand together.

And let's stand tall.

[I know what you're thinking. "That's easy for him to say." Am I right?]

Thank you for all you do – here this week and all year long.

I look forward to a great Membership Assembly.