

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Adam London,
MPA, RS, DAAS

In Defense of National Safety and Security

The environmental health workforce is vital to protecting the health and safety of the public. You and I know this fact, and we also understand that the world expects more from environmental health professionals than ever before. The days when our profession could merely focus on food, water, and waste are long gone. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, and floods present countless environmental hazards that often persist long after the event has ended. New and emerging vectorborne diseases such as Zika and chikungunya demonstrate that we need a clear understanding of the latest science and technology to supplement the things we learned in college.

As I write this column, sanitarians on my team at the Kent County Health Department are working with other agencies on an investigation of groundwater contaminated with perfluoroalkyl substances, which is affecting hundreds of residents in a rural part of our county. These issues, along with a growing understanding of the environmental precursors to chronic illnesses, remind us that environmental health is a knowledge-based profession. The science of environmental health has many answers to the challenges facing our communities. It is up to us to make sure that we are the best practitioners of this science that we possibly can be. This reality demands that we adhere to a lifetime commitment to continuous education and that we can demonstrate proficiency.

I believe that every professional using the title of environmental health specialist, sanitarian, or similar title, or are administering

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regulatory environmental health services on behalf of a unit of government, should be credentialed as an environmental health specialist or sanitarian. This credential is provided by either the state of residency or through the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). Approximately 28 states currently require this sort of credentialing to practice environmental health. I appreciate that these states have recognized the need for professional development and quality improvement. It is my firm belief that the residents of the remaining states would be surprised to learn that the people who protect them from environmental health hazards have no formal requirement for ongoing education and/or a demonstration of competency.

Our communities expect that the water they drink and the food they eat is safe. They expect safety in the air they breathe, the water they swim in, and the child care centers where they leave their children. They expect environmental health professionals to solve problems regardless of how new or obscure they might be. Thankfully, you are tremen-

dous problem solvers and NEHA's membership is among the best educated and most impressive portion of our profession. I have full faith and confidence in your abilities; however, we must never become complacent. I believe that we should hold ourselves to a higher standard because the purpose of our work is so important.

As mentioned at the start of this column, the environmental health workforce is vital to protecting the health and safety of the public. I am pleased to let you know that these words are contained within proposed federal legislation. These words are from the opening statement of H.R. 1909, which was introduced into the U.S. Congress by Representative Brenda Lawrence (D-MI). This bill, called the Environmental Health Workforce Act, recognizes that educating and training existing and new environmental health professionals should be a national public health goal. Representative Lawrence, in the aftermath of the Flint tragedy, understands that a high quality environmental health workforce plays a role in preventing similar tragedies from happening elsewhere.

The bill, if passed, would require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop model standards and guidelines for credentialing, create a workforce development plan, report on the status of credentialing within the profession, and ensure that the environmental health workforce is included in public service loan forgiveness programs. These reports created by HHS could powerfully inform future policies at the federal, state, and local levels regarding environmental health credentialing. I believe

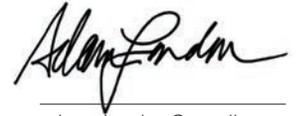
this bill is a bold step toward strengthening public health and safety. A stronger environmental health workforce is also good for the national security of the U.S. These are messages that should resonate with elected officials who have sworn to protect the nation's well-being.

This month, I ask you to contact your elected officials in Washington, DC, and tell them that you support H.R. 1909. More specifically, focus your communications on the representatives

who chair the committees where this bill currently resides. Please contact Representative Greg Walden (R-OR), who chairs the Committee on Energy and Commerce; Representative Michael Burgess (R-TX), who chairs the Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Health; and Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), who chairs the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Please let them know that the environmental health workforce is critical to our nation's

health, safety, and security. A list of elected officials and how they can be contacted is available online at www.house.gov/representatives and www.congress.gov/members. Imagine the impact thousands of letters and calls from NEHA members could have on the process! 🐛



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Did You Know?

Early discounted registration for the NEHA 2018 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition and HUD Health Homes Conference, June 25–28, will be opening in December? Don't miss this opportunity to save money on your registration at www.neha.org/aec/register!

SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for one year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at 303.756.9090. You can also donate online at www.neha.org/about-neha/donate.

Thank you.

DELEGATE CLUB (\$25–\$99)

Name in the Journal for one year and endowment pin.

Freda W. Bredy
Alexandria, VA

HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–\$499)

Letter from the NEHA president, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.

Lynne Madison, RS
Hancock, MI

Paschal Nwako, MPH, PhD, REHS, CHES, DAAS
Blackwood, NJ

Larry Ramdin, REHS, CP-FS, HHS
Salem, MA

Ned Therien, MPH
Olympia, WA

21st CENTURY CLUB

(\$500–\$999)

Name submitted in drawing for a free one-year NEHA membership, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.

Peter M. Schmitt
Shakopee, MN

Leon Vinci, DHA, RS
Roanoke, VA

SUSTAINING MEMBERS CLUB

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Name submitted in drawing for a free two-year NEHA membership, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.

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Metairie, LA

Bob Custard, REHS, CP-FS
Lovettsville, VA

David T. Dyjack, DrPH, CIH
Denver, CO

George A. Morris, RS
Dousman, WI

AFFILIATES CLUB

(\$2,500–\$4,999)

Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.

EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(\$5,000–\$100,000)

Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.

Vince Radke, MPH, RS, CP-FS, DAAS, CPH
Atlanta, GA