

## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Adam London,  
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## The State of Our Association

It truly is amazing how fast a year passes. As I near the conclusion of my year in the presidential chair, I can't help but reflect upon the state of our association. The fact that you are reading this column suggests that you also care a great deal about environmental health. All of us who get involved with leadership at the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) or within the state affiliates care deeply about this profession and we want to see our organizations rise to meet the challenges of a new day. We give our time as volunteers in pursuit of self-actualization and the satisfaction that comes with knowing that our blood, sweat, and tears actually contribute to a better world. With this in mind, I must report to you that your association is stronger than it has ever been, but not nearly as strong as it needs to be.

The organizational health of NEHA is demonstrated in many ways. The association has received clean financial audits for multiple years and has finished the past couple of years in the black after suffering significant losses during prior years. NEHA remains competitive for federally funded grant projects and cooperative agreements, which helps to ensure that we are able to be a difference-making organization. The most recent Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibitions in Grand Rapids and San Antonio were well attended with high member satisfaction scores. We have also secured outstanding locations for the upcoming AECs: Anaheim in 2018, Nashville in 2019, and New York City in 2020. Membership has grown to an all-time high of nearly 5,000 professionals. I hope you have also

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noticed that the NEHA website and membership/learning platforms have been improved. Perhaps most important, we have beefed up our ability to influence environmental health policy. Staff located in Washington, DC, meet with elected officials and federal departments and advocate for better environmental health policy and for the environmental health workforce.

I have been honored to attend many meetings across the U.S. and to represent NEHA at the World Congress on Environmental Health earlier this year in New Zealand. It has been a pleasure to discuss the state of environmental health with my counterparts from dozens of places. I am always amazed at how similar environmental health professionals are, regardless of state or national origin. It is also clear to me that NEHA is generally held in high esteem by our state affiliates and international neighbors. And yet, we can do

better. We need to make sure the connective tissue and resource sharing between our like-minded organizations are strengthened. There are great opportunities for our organizations to speak up in unison for a healthier world. NEHA is on the cusp of approving several new and revised position papers. I encourage you to become familiar with, and use, the wealth of information that is contained in the position papers that can be found on NEHA's website ([www.neha.org/publications/position-papers](http://www.neha.org/publications/position-papers)).

Despite these positive developments—and I could go on with a number of others—I believe that NEHA is not nearly strong enough as it needs to be. NEHA should be at the forefront in the minds of policy makers as they consider issues pertinent to human health and the environment. We are not there yet. While we have a record number of members, we should probably have twice as many, and those members need to be more engaged. The NEHA Endowment and Scholarship Funds can become dynamic forces for advancing environmental health projects and education if they are adequately funded and purposed. We are making progress, but we will not achieve our goals unless everyone pulls a little harder and recruits another colleague to the cause.

One of my earlier columns discussed the threats to funding of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). I encouraged all of you to contact your representatives in Washington, DC, and stand up for this important issue. I am happy to report that the final spending bill included full funding of GLRI that is equivalent to prior years. Thank you for your actions—you contributed to a team victory.

Continue to be involved and do not underestimate the power that you have to change the course of history. Elected officials in Washington, DC, and in state capitols across the nation truly do listen to the concerns of their constituents. Place their office telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in your contact list. Phone calls and e-mails give them pause to consider the ramifications of their policy decisions.

Over the past couple of years NEHA has developed muscle in this arena. In addition to our Washington, DC, staff, we also held our Second Annual Lobby Day in Washington, DC, on May 1, 2018. During this day of polit-

ical advocacy, your NEHA board of directors and staff visited the offices of numerous elected officials to educate them about the importance of environmental health and the environmental health workforce. I have been encouraged by these conversations because I think many eyes are being opened to the fact that environmental health is a core component of national safety and security.

As this presidency comes to an end for me, I hope I can count on you to help NEHA reach its potential. This association and all its state affiliates need new leaders and volunteers. Please get involved for the sake of environmental health and for your own per-

sonal benefit. My time on the NEHA board of directors has required many hours of my volunteer time, but to be totally honest, it has been a fantastically fun ride. I hope to see you in Anaheim for the NEHA 2018 AEC & Exhibition and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Healthy Homes Conference, June 25–28, and I hope to hear your aspirations for taking NEHA to new heights 🐼



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## THANK YOU for Supporting the NEHA/AAS Scholarship Fund

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**To donate**, visit [www.neha.org/about-neha/donate/nehaaas-scholarship-program](http://www.neha.org/about-neha/donate/nehaaas-scholarship-program).

## 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](http://www.neha.org/about-neha/donate).

*Thank you.*

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#### Vince Radke, MPH, RS, CP-FS, DAAS, CPH

Atlanta, GA