



**NCSBN**  
Leading Regulatory Excellence

***Past Event: 2022 NCSBN Leadership and Public Policy Conference - To the Capitol and Beyond! Taking Policy Risks Video Transcript***  
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**Event**

2022 NCSBN Leadership and Public Policy Conference

More info: <https://www.ncsbn.org/past-event/2022-ncsbn-leadership-and-public-policy-conference>

**Presenter**

Jim Cleghorn, Director, Member Engagement & Government Affairs

- [Jim] So, the next session on our agenda this afternoon is "To the Capitol and Beyond! Taking Policy Risks." As you can see, the presenter is Dr. Maryann Alexander, and that's not me. I'm going to step in and give Maryann's presentation today. So, welcome to St.

Augustine. The city was founded in 1565 by Spanish explorers. As I understand it, it's the oldest continuously inhabited European-established settlement in the contiguous United States. As you look out to the seashore, or go into the historic parts of town, you can't help but recognize the beauty of this area.

Personally, I'm looking for the fountain of youth. I understand it's somewhere around here, anything that I can maybe do to get rid of the circles and the bags around my eyes. I haven't found it yet, but if you happen to visit there before we leave, please let me know where it's at. As you look through the agenda, and you look towards the event on Friday, you might question, just a little bit, why the Kennedy Space Center?

What is the connection between the Space Center and public policy? I asked myself this same question. I'm excited about getting to go, but just trying to understand what the connection between the two. So, our theme for this meeting is boldly exploring. You can't explore, you can't be an explorer without being willing to take on risk. You know, I think about when we were playing as children.

We all wanted to dress up as cowboys, cowgirls, or maybe you wanted to be an astronaut. Those were the two big ones for us. You wanted to take on those risks and go exploring. Some really might argue that there is no greater risk than space exploration. That would be the penultimate type of risk.

So Maryann was sharing with me that, in 1999, she was attending a meeting at the National Institutes of Health. As I understand it, there was a lot going on at that time. NIH had its own moonshot, if you will. They had a... They were working on cracking the genetic code. They had recently signed off on the

guidelines for stem cell research, and that information was being forwarded to President Clinton for his approval.

In addition to all of this, protection of human subjects had become a significant issue. There were a number of research studies at hospitals, at universities, even with the Department of Veterans Affairs, that had been shut down because of concerns about the impact on the human subjects.

Violations had occurred, and the government was stepping in and was about to crack down. An alphabet soup of government agencies were convened for this meeting. There were representatives from universities the country, from hospital systems. They were all here to examine the issues and come up with solutions. Maryann explained that all the usual players that you would expect at a meeting of this caliber were there.

People from HRSA, from Health and Human Services, from Food and Drug Administration, they were all there, making introductions and asking questions as they were going around the room. She said, next, someone from NASA spoke up, and everyone's heads kind of whirled around, trying to figure out what in the world is someone from NASA doing at this meeting?

Why would they even be present? And what is their connection to the impact of research on human subjects, or public policy, for that matter, anything that was being discussed. And, as I understand it, one of the participants kind of said as much, you know, "What are you doing here?"

What's the purpose of this? And they indicated that... The representative from NASA stood up and said that their astronauts were human subjects who took bigger risks than participants in any type of clinical trial. These were the...or any type of research project. The astronauts were taking that ultimate risk.

Those astronauts that have come through the space program over the years have changed the world more than you and I could ever begin to imagine. Through those great risks have come incredible benefits to our world. Even the roots of telemedicine are entwined with NASA's earliest days and the modern history of human spaceflight.

I mean, they had to be able to monitor the impacts of space travel on the human body. What was the absence of gravity going to do to the circulatory system? What was it going to... How was it going to impact the body? How were we going to be able to monitor the health of the astronauts that are at the Space Station? There are so many things in our world today that have been impacted because of the space program. Dr.

Jordan was talking about President Kennedy's address at Rice University in 1962. And when the President was discussing the necessity for the United States to become an international leader in space exploration, he didn't say, "We want to go to the moon," or "We would like to go to the moon," or "It might be a good idea." He said, "We choose to go to the moon," and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.

That was an incredible display of human will, of political will, being able to step out there and say, "We're going to do this. I'm going to lead us. We're going to do this because it's what we need to do as a country." The greater the risk, oftentimes, the greater the benefit. You know, there was a great risk for the space program, but out of that came an incredible benefit.

I think anytime you take on that kind of risk, and then you see the success from it, there is an exhilaration that comes from the accomplishment, from that achievement. And it motivates us to go on and try to do more things.

It motivates us to go on and tackle new ideas, and keep pressing forward. Let's rewind about 45, 46, 47, 48 years to another time that risk came into play. These are some of the founders of NCSBN. If you look across the screen, you see Joyce Schowalter, Mildred Schmidt, Trudy Malone, Elaine Elibee, and Pat Keefe.

I can remember them because of the conference rooms at NCSBN. That's forever memorialized there. Their idea of an organization solely for the regulator, that really must have seemed like a moonshot at that time, and for those individuals.

There was a huge risk in even talking about separating from the American Nurses Association. You know, from a political standpoint, it wasn't a favorable idea. ANA would be losing some of its most influential members. They'd be losing the ones who really had all the power and authority, quite honestly, they'd be stepping out. The idea was met with great dissension.

And then, to top it all off, they had no money. There was no budget. There was no way for them to accomplish this. But they kept asking the question, "Why was it necessary?" It was the right thing to do. Having the regulator be part of the professional association, how could you do both? And that was one of the things that those ladies kept questioning.

It's just the right thing to do. All the risks were present, but there still seemed to be a substantial benefit for stepping out and taking that move. How can you be part of a professional association and still be responsible for protecting the public? It just didn't seem to make sense. Dr.

Jordan mentioned that, in leadership, you never know exactly what the ending is going to be, but you have to be willing to step out and take that move to see what's going to happen. It was a lesson in risk and public policy. At the 1975 House of Delegates for the ANA, a vote was planned to talk about the creation of a new agency, a new organization.

And being politically savvy and astute, Mildred Schmidt knew that the vote... they didn't have the votes. It wasn't going to go their way, and it was probably going to fail, and if it did, she knew that it was going to be a long time before there was the political will, before there was the ability for them to bring it up again if it failed that time, just difficult to stir that appetite, to get people to move on again.

So, in a brilliant policy move, Miss Schmidt came up with the idea of taking an incremental step. She said, "Let's create a study group. Let's create a task force that can review the idea, can take a year, bring the information back at the next House of Delegates. It gave everybody an opportunity to kind of think about it. It gave the task force the ability to create some goodwill, to get their ducks in a row, to build support. And the House of Delegates that year supported that move and gave them the task force. Now, the study group was comprised of members of various boards of nursing, along with Barbara Nichols. Barbara was included to represent ANA's point of view, and she agreed to be part of the workgroup. Now, this was a huge risk for Barbara. As I understand it, she was preparing to run for president of the ANA the next year, and being associated with this group, it just wasn't going to be politically savvy for her to take part of it. At the end of the year, a feasibility study was proposed. And look what we have today. Out of that moonshot, out of that idea, we have the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. The resources that are provided to many of your organizations as Boards of Nursing, everything that we

do here has public protection at the forefront. The member networking and engagement that are provided to each of us. And then, stop and think about the information that has been gleaned over the past 45 years. Being on the cutting edge of testing, research, licensure, discipline, and all of this that's been provided for us, because of those founding individuals, their willingness to take that risk, to take a step out, to have that moonshot idea, and be willing to take the risk to see what was going to happen. This organization was born out of the founders' moonshot. You might ask, 'What happened to Barbara Nichols?'

Well, she did become president of the ANA. She had a solid foundation of relationships that she had built. You know what, that's one thing that you don't wait to do when you need it. You don't wait until you need those relationships. You start building them on the front side so that you've got that political capital, you've got that information saved up in the bank for when you need it. Barbara Nichols and those founding individuals knew that it was okay to take the risk, to assess the risk, to count the cost, to minimize the risk where possible, and to strategize.

So, we brought you here today to help prepare you. It's okay to take a risk. There are going to be things in your journey, as a leader, as a regulator, where you're going to have to take a risk. You're going to have to identify and evaluate the risks, and then, also consider the potential benefits that the outcomes may bring.

You'll minimize the risk through effective policy, prepare and educate the stakeholders about any residual risks. And we want to equip you to prepare and strategize, and ultimately be ready for the unexpected. So, we brought you to St. Augustine to boldly explore the ideas, to network, to spend some time together to see how we can energize you and motivate you. Start thinking about what your bold exploration will be.

When you head home on Friday, you will have been provided the tools and resources to help you craft effective public policy. We're going to learn about the past so that you can help prepare for the future. And, hopefully, you will have been inspired and be ready to go back and enact change. What's your moonshot going to be? Is it going to be something at the State Capitol?

Is it going to be building...creating local momentum on a particular issue? Is it going to be just changing the culture in your organization? What's it going to be? Maybe it's going to be something national. Perhaps you'll be influencing policy decisions, policy perspectives at the federal level. Maybe, maybe it's going to be international. Maybe you're going to be working on legislation that allows nurses to practice across international borders.

Just perhaps it's going to be beyond the borders of this world, and into orbit, into space. You know, that's really not that far away. As I understand it, Johns Hopkins already has a program for nurses where nurses can participate in the space program, whether it be monitoring the astronauts as they're in space, or eventually practicing in space, sending nurses as astronauts.

Don't forget, the possibilities that you have as a regulator, and as a leader, are endless and out of this world. Your small step may be a giant leap for nursing regulation. I hope each of you have a wonderful time this week. Enjoy the conference.

If there's anything that we can do, please let us know. At this point, we'll have a break out in the lobby. And then we'll come back in at 2:30 for our next session. Thank you very much, and have a good afternoon.