



NCSBN
Leading Regulatory Excellence

Past Event: 2026 NCSBN Annual Meeting – President’s Address Video Transcript

Event

2026 NCSBN Annual Meeting

More info: <https://www.ncsbn.org/past-event/2026-annual-meeting>

Presenter

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Well, here it is, our time together once again. I look out at this room, and I think we sure have been through something special together. Haven't we?

And I mean that in the best possible way. I brought something with me today, a visual aid. This is the president's chair, the one that actually sits in the NCSBN boardroom. Now, there are other chairs in that boardroom just like it, but this one is different.

For a little girl from Mississippi, the SIP to have sat in that chair has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional career. I do not say that lightly, and yes, that is my actual baby picture.

I say it with full appreciation of what it means, and full gratitude to every single one of you that has helped me experience it.

This is my last meeting as your president, and so today I want to talk about what sitting in that chair taught me, what it requires, what it changes, and what I hope each of you will do with your chairs. I have served in many roles in my career as a bedside nurse, a family nurse practitioner, a VA clinician for over 33 years, and a Naval Reserve officer, and for many years now as the executive officer of the Mississippi Board of Nursing.

I thought I understood leadership. I thought I understood this organization. I even sat next to that chair for three years, three years, as president-elect, seeing how it worked. And then I sat in this chair.

Let me tell you something about what happens when you become NCSBN president, because I don't think I've heard many people talk about this. People assume the role gets bigger, with more work, more responsibility, more weight, and yes, all of that is certainly true.

But that is not the most important thing that changes. What changes is your field of vision and realizing the real duty of the role. It may look one way from the outside until you realize you are not seeing the full picture. You never know what a chair is like until you sit in it.

The cushion is very nice, but it's not easy to sit in that chair. But like I always say, if it's hard to do, it's certainly worth doing. When I sit in my EO chair in Mississippi, my responsibility is clear and is singular: to make the best decisions I can for my Board and the public we serve.

I ask, what is best for my jurisdiction? I see challenges through that lens, and I hold myself accountable to it. When I sat in the president's chair, the question changed tremendously. Now I have to ask, when I sat in this chair, not only what is best for Mississippi, but what is best for all of the jurisdictions.

Not just one, all of them. Not one Board's perspective, every Board's perspective. Not one set of challenges. Every challenge emerging across every state and regulatory body that looks to this organization for leadership and support.

And what is best for NCSBN as an organization, so that we can continue to support and advance one another. When you sit in this chair, you see and you appreciate all of your chairs. And I want to be honest with you about something else that this seat requires.

Because some of you have wondered, and I know this, whether leadership at this level truly represents everyone. Whether there's a kind of club. Whether some voices are heard more than others. I heard that, and I took it seriously. Because sitting in that chair does not mean sitting above the membership.

It means sitting in service to it. Every single member of it. And I can tell you, there is no club. We are all the club. It's simple. When you sit in a different chair, you see different things. You have a new perspective and new responsibilities.

When I sat in this chair, it was very much still me. That chair also requires making tough decisions. Decisions that don't have clean answers. Decisions where reasonable people disagree and where the right choice is not always the easy one or the popular one, but it is the necessary one.

You all know exactly what I mean because the same is true in your leadership roles. Sitting in the president's chair means making those decisions anyway. Transparently, collaboratively, and always with the mission in front of you.

Always asking: what does this mean for the public that we have to serve and protect? When I became your president two years ago, I made a commitment. We were going to listen before we acted to get all your perspectives.

And that is exactly what we did. What you told us changed how we meet, how we learn, how we engage, how we research, and how we serve you. In my first year, we went out to the membership. We asked what you needed.

What was working. What wasn't working. What you wished NCSBN understood better about your day-to-day work. We made sure that much of our meetings were not just about talking to you, but about hearing from you. We made your voice more central to what happens here. What we heard informed what came next.

And what came next was the theme of this past year, "Evidence in Action." Now I want to be clear about what evidence in action means to me. It's not a tagline. It's a way of operating. It means we don't move until we know. We don't act until we listen. We don't change things because change is exciting.

We change things because the evidence tells us we must, and because the public that each and every one of us is charged to protect deserves nothing less than our most informed, courageous, evidence-driven best. And I am proud of what we have done together.

Across examinations, memory engagement, learning and development, research, technology, and our licensure compacts, we move forward, deliberately, together, grounded in what each of you told us you needed. And we were committed to delivering it.

That is what evidence in action looks like from this chair. I would not be doing this role, honor, if I left today without speaking plainly about what is coming. Because one of my most important jobs in this moment is to hand this organization to its next leaders with clear eyes about the road ahead.

In just these last two years, artificial intelligence has fully arrived. In some ways, you no doubt feel you're already behind it. And the questions it raises for nursing regulation are not simple ones. Who will be practicing? Will it be the nurse? Or will it be software?

What is practice? And what will AI mean to scope? How do we ensure that the technology assisting care does not outpace our regulatory frameworks designed to protect patients? We don't have all the answers yet, but we must immerse ourselves in all of these conversations, not react after the fact, but shape it and get in front of it.

See it for what it is, not as only a threat, but all of it. The good, the bad, and the ugly. And like everything else, we need it at high noon. The evidence is clear.

We need to do something about the APRN Compact. And so we are. That effort needs all of us. It needs us to create the best version. Now the need is real, and the evidence is clear. And the patients who lack access to advanced practice care cannot wait for us to find the perfect moment or the perfect version.

We need the best version. And not only do we need all of us to be a part of it, we all need to help get everyone behind it. The nursing workforce will always be a concern. The trick is knowing and communicating the ways it can affect public protection, including how people try to address it.

We have to fully understand it, talk about it, act on it, and use our regulatory expertise to help shape solutions. And nursing regulation itself is operating under increasing visibility. You all know that. From scope of practice debates to discipline decisions to how regulators respond is under a very bright spotlight, brighter than ever before.

That's not a threat to our work. It is not a spotlight. It is sunlight. And we welcome it. You know why? Because when you are right, you are right. It betters us, and it betters our mission.

These are not small challenges, but I'm not worried. And I'll tell you why. Because I spent many, many years as part of this membership. And what I see is not a group of people waiting for someone to tell them what to do. I see a room full of people who wake up every morning and make hard decisions in service of the public, who show up when it's inconvenient, who do the unglamorous work, who know the mission and they live it.

I leave my role as president with complete confidence, not because the road is easy, because it's not, but because I see the people around me who are traveling it. I want to take a moment to say thank you to you, our members, and I said I was going to try not to get emotional.

You, our members, thank you from the bottom of my heart for letting me borrow this chair. Thank you for trusting little old me with something so important. The relationships I have built in this role, the conversations, the moments, the connections across states and countries, those are mine to keep.

And I will cherish and carry them with enormous gratitude to each and every one of you. To the SIP, my staff, my board of directors, and they are in the room, thank you. Thank you.

Thank you for your support. And most importantly, to my staff, thank you for not only your tireless work, but for everything you have done to allow me to sit in this chair and serve as president of NCSBN. Staff, you all wear so many hats.

Board of directors, you are busier than a church fan in July in the church in the SIP, where it's 110 degrees. And I need you, I need you. I need you very much. Thank you. And to the NCSBN staff, thank you. Thank you.

You know, the NCSBN staff are the engine of this organization. If you don't know, you should know. And so much of what they do is invisible, and it's essential. And I have made it a priority to make sure that the staff at NCSBN are seen, they are recognized for what they contribute to this agency. I am grateful for each and every one of you.

I thought I was going to miss Phil, but I'm going to miss the staff more so. To my NCSBN board of directors, thank you. You are such a remarkable group of leaders.

Folks, these people are very special. There are no agendas, just good people who understand their duty and the mission. The strategic thinking we have done, watching them consider all aspects of issues, trying to see many perspectives.

Board of directors and NCSBN, you challenged me, but you supported me. You trusted me, and you held me accountable all at the same time. Which is exactly what a good Board is supposed to do. It has been a genuine honor to serve with each and every one of you.

To Jay Douglas, I want to say thank you to Jay. She was my predecessor. Thanks for her leadership and friendship, and preparing me for this responsibility. Jay, you made it look easy. The president and the president-elect relationship is such a crucial one that makes all the difference.

And then, there's this guy, Phil Dickison. Where are you, Phil? Did you...? Oh, there you are. P square. We share military backgrounds, and from the very beginning, we understood each other in a particular way.

We value straight talk, hard work, and decisive action, and we have no time for things that don't serve the mission. Phil has a rare spirit, if you haven't picked up on it. He's always pushing, always asking, how can we make it better? What is really needed? What should we be doing and not doing? And it's just about the way he talks, okay? That energy, that get-it-right drive is what we needed.

Of course, I like to think I provide a certain calm to that part of P square. When we had differences, we talked it out. It was never contentious. It was always constructive, and it was always for the greater good and the mission. The relationship between a CEO and a board president, don't miss this, is one of the most consequential dynamics in any organization.

Phil, we got it right, and I am so proud of that. I encourage the importance of that relationship as NCSBN moves forward. And so, Phil Dickison, P square, Phil and Phyllis, thank you from the depths of my heart. Now, I'm not going to go away entirely, not just yet.

I still have my EO role back in the SIP. I intend to keep doing that work. And eventually, I'm going to spend more dedicated time with my family. This is my family, my grandchildren, my children, my two sons, and my 90-year-old dad. But before I go, I want to leave you with something.

I have talked today about what it means to sit in the president's chair, about the perspective it gives you and the responsibility it carries. But here's what I have come to believe more deeply than perhaps anything else over these two years. Leadership is not really about the role. It's not about getting to sit in a certain chair.

It's about the change that happens to you when you choose to. There are many chairs in this organization. Some are at the Board table, some are on the committees and work groups. Most are not on the stage. Some are at a table during one of our meals. Get to know those individuals sitting at that table with you.

Listen to them. Listen to a voice you haven't heard where you invited someone into your circle who hadn't found their way in yet. That is how One NCSBN becomes more than words. That is how we grow by thousands, small, daily voluntary choices.

Remember what I said One NCSBN is really all about. We build each other up. We make each other better. We give back to something larger than ourselves. So here is my challenge to you.

Keep pulling up a chair. Sit next to someone you don't know. Take on a role you have never considered. Join the conversation you've been watching. Lead the project.

Volunteer for the committee. Take the course. Pursue publishing your work. Accept the opportunity you are not sure you are ready for. Look for new perspectives and expand your field of vision. You may be more ready than you think. And if not, NCSBN definitely has the resources to help you get there if you are willing to put in the work.

And you know me, I'm not afraid to put in the work. So I want to again thank you for this opportunity to serve as your president of National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

Thank you all again for your leadership, for your support. And going forward, I look forward to enjoying more opportunities to see each one of you in leadership in this organization. And with that, the 2026 NCSBN annual meeting will now come to order.