

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Need for Nurse Advocacy

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This has been one of the more difficult Presidential columns for me to write. Over time, I have served as President of ANA-Ohio and previously as ANA President (2006-2010), and I have written close to 70 editorials. My opinion-based commentary has been intended to share ideas, be insightful, and stimulate further readers' reflection and action. If we ever need critical thinking and action, it is now. This is a crucial time for our nation and nurses to speak out and stand together, regardless of party affiliation or political ideology.

The release of the newly revised ANA Code of Ethics (January 2025) could not have come at a better time. As I looked at it closely to see what was new, I reflected on its purpose. Whether for a new or seasoned nurse, it is THE most important, essential resource in our complicated, sometimes upside-down world. Our Code of Ethics guides our actions and expresses the values, ideals, and ethical responsibilities we are committed to fulfill each day as individuals first and nurses second. I like to think that the Code is our contract with society and what society can count on us to think and do. Navigating our world with a commitment to the Code of Ethics is an element of our professional citizenship.

As I read each provision, I kept flipping back to the glossary to appreciate the context of the words. As nursing professionals, we certainly understand terms such as advocacy, human rights, and conflict of interest. It is a part of our DNA. I recognized that consideration of other terms like coercion, dehumanization, misinformation, moral distress, and justice is occurring at a greater frequency than previously in our society. All the provisions and the glossary terms are relevant today in what people are experiencing,

especially since January 2025. But Provision 9 of the Code (ANA, 2025) stood out for me. It calls on individual and professional nurses associations to take action to address social justice, health equities, and social concerns.

My long-held belief is elections have con-



sequences—some of which we want and expect while others do not. I have tried to respect that every newly elected legislator, including the President, has the right and responsibility to lead our nation and make changes they envision will advance the United States. But this election cycle has not been reassuring when I anticipate the negative impact. My comments here are not intended to create a political divide among us. Rather, I hope to recognize responsibility for our profession and speak out about the impact of the Executive Orders and proposed legislation on the health and well-being of individuals and our nation.

As trusted professionals, with our priority focus on health and well-being, we can educate and influence those making decisions that ultimately impact our nation's health. Our educational preparation, professional practice knowledge, and experience in the health care systems position nurses as experts on health. We understand how science informs today's practice and can fulfill the promises of having a tomorrow. The NIH funding reduction and pause will have significant consequences and potentially result in fewer tomorrows for some individuals. We

know very well what happens if we do not have health insurance and access to primary and preventive care services. Removing or limiting access to Medicaid and financial assistance for food will not lead us to a healthy world, nor will these strategies be cost-effective in the long run. Decades of research provides strong evidence of improved health outcomes and increased economic security with participation in such programs (Burns et al., 2025).

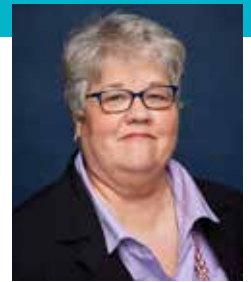
This is the time for all nurses to act, share the potential impact, and advocate for a healthy tomorrow for all. Reach out to our federal representatives and share how the program reductions will negatively impact Ohio citizens. And while you are at it, get involved with the upcoming races in Ohio.

Over the next several months, Ohio citizens will have the important responsibility of determining and electing the best replacement for Governor DeWine. The next governor will have a significant role in leading our state and creating and supporting programs that can result in a healthy Ohio. If not already, register to vote and help others do the same. Be an informed voter about candidates. Look for opportunities to meet and advocate for candidates who support programs resulting in a healthy Ohio. As nurses, we can make a difference in elections. I encourage YOU to be the difference by using your voice to advocate. ■

Contact Information for our representatives:

Senators, <https://www.senate.gov/states/OH/intro.htm>

U.S. Representatives, <https://www.house.gov/representatives#state-ohio>



(continued on page 4)