

ONA...A Vision for the Future

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"EVERY GREAT DREAM BEGINS WITH A DREAMER..." These powerful words by Harriett Tubman remind us of the passion and determination that drive change. In the nursing profession, change is constant — and essential. The Oklahoma Nurses Association (ONA) stands at a pivotal moment, poised to evolve into a more inclusive, responsive, and agile organization that reflects the diversity and dynamism of today's nursing workforce.

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

—Harriet Tubman

ONA's leadership recognizes that the association must do more than just grow — it must evolve. It is time to consider strategic reorganization, focused on modernization, inclusivity, and member engagement. Our goal should be to create a responsive, member-centered organization capable of adapting to rapid changes in healthcare, workforce trends, and member needs, and being financially vibrant.

Nursing is not one-size-fits-all. It encompasses various roles — each vital to the health and well-being of our communities. Among these roles are Registered Nurses, Advance Practice Nurses, and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). LPNs have long been excluded from participation in state nurses associations, as RN licensure has been a requirement for membership. Our LPN colleagues have often lacked a unified voice in policy, advocacy, and professional development as a result of this exclusion.

But tides are turning...ANA has allowed its state partners to establish LPN

membership categories on a limited basis. As a result, 11 state pilot programs have launched, reflecting a growing recognition of LPNs' importance in today's healthcare landscape. At the recent ANA Membership Assembly, the proposed bylaws allowing LPNs as members of ANA and the states were tabled until 2026, as more work is needed.

In Oklahoma alone, over 16,000 LPNs practice statewide. Yet today, there is no robust professional body advocating for them on the state or national level. According to a study conducted by ANA, 58% of LPNs believe it's important to be involved with a professional organization — a need that ONA is uniquely positioned to fulfill in our state.

This transformation is about more than bylaws — it's about vision. A vision of a unified nursing community in Oklahoma where all nurses, LPNs, RNs, and APRNs have a seat at the table...If you're not at the table, you're on the menu.

Our vision should include:

- **Enhancing Governance:** Transitioning away from the traditional governance models to a more streamlined, flexible, and participatory format.
- **Expanding Committees and the Process:** Broadening the committee framework to provide direct channels for member input on policy, practice, innovation, and organizational direction.
- **Building Community:** Emphasizing transparency, shared leadership, and grassroots involvement to strengthen advocacy and foster deeper member engagement.
- **Embracing ALL Nurses:** Designing structures that support the needs of newer generations of nurses — our future leaders — as well as more diverse types of nurses by offering flexible, in-

clusive, and meaningful opportunities for involvement.

Ultimately, it's about creating an organization that is agile, modern, and able to meet members where they are — whether they're students, new graduates, or seasoned professionals. However, this must come from you....ONA is your organization! It is your opportunity to use your voice!

By embracing change, expanding membership, and realigning its governance structure, ONA has the opportunity to not just keep pace—but to lead into the future.

Remember, every great dream begins with a dreamer. And together, we have the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars — and to change the world of nursing in Oklahoma. ■

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