

We live in challenging times.

This past year started off with the resignation of our long term president, Jerry Jurena. His resignation started a nation-wide search which the board decided to take on without a professional recruiter to save money. We received a number of resumes but none with experience at the level we expected for our state so we re-issued the vacancy notice. Tim Blasl, a long time employee and senior exec within our organization applied and after a lengthy interview process was ultimately selected as our new president. The problem now was Jerry's contract was up in August and Tim had just been hired with very limited experience in leading our Association through a legislative session, which would be coming in four short months. Jerry's contract was extended through December to help Tim with relationship building and establishing his vision for the session. Tim took the reins as the single leader of the Association on day one of the legislative session.

Back to all of our issues for a bit. It takes a special type of leader to deal with all of the "opportunities" we face in this industry. Constantly changing regulations, federal lawmakers who are not sure what they want yet create fixes for problems that would be better resolved by the industry dealing with them and state legislators wanting to reduce state budgets all impact us. This would include price transparency, the 340b program, anti trust, quality measures, CHIP, Medicare Dependent, rural healthcare, and population health. This is not an exhaustive list but just to demonstrate the complexity of issues being dealt with at the state and federal level. And that we have to respond to.

More locally, our legislature addressed several issues that would directly impact the financial wellness of our organizations. Among these, Medicaid expansion, moving the expansion TPA into state management, Medicaid rate equalization, direct contracting for Medicaid services and many other topics that could impact many of you. Our staff at NDHA and the Legislative Committee composed of representatives from member hospitals across the state identified the threat that most of these items brought and dealt with them directly and professionally. On a daily basis Tim and Melissa were present in the halls of the state building meeting individually with legislators to ensure they understood the impact of their decisions. The inside story to the importance of this is that they were available when people wanted to share about certain bills that were coming up and who was sponsoring them. During the legislative session Melissa was battling months of cancer treatment yet did not miss a day. Tim was juggling the interests of a disparate membership and the intent of a state executive and lead legislator that would have dramatically changed how the state did its Medicaid business. Our NDHA leadership managed all of these issues, continued the daily operation of the association and subordinate businesses, focused the activities of the Legislative Committee and continued to communicate with the membership. A pretty remarkable start for a new team! Oh, and none of the major issues that threatened hospitals in this session passed due in large part to the efforts of our NDHA team.

Now for what's coming. The staff at NDHA is still not complete. Tim has not replaced the position that he vacated and will work on that over the coming year. As this is an "off year" from a legislative standpoint Tim will be significantly increasing his member visits. Melissa will be monitoring the interim committees and working with the Legislative Committee to address any items that come from them. Tim and Melissa both will be further developing relationships across the state that were not focused on due to legislative activities and the whole NDHA team will be watching what is happening at the federal level through John Flink, our consultant/lobbyist in Washington. We anticipate many activities/legislation

around transparency, 340b, Medicare reimbursement and new models of care in rural areas this year, although current political activities may derail some of them.

In closing, I have mentioned Tim and Melissa but would be incredibly remiss if I did not acknowledge the work of Kelly, Lori and Pam (I cannot address the other business elements in the Association as I have not worked with them). They seamlessly work through the myriad daily issues brought to the Association and work even harder to ensure that your needs are met or exceeded when you contact NDHA. I encourage all of you to be a part of the Association. I know that Tim and Melissa appreciate your viewpoints and priorities as this helps them develop tactics to support you. I want to assure you that this team of committed individuals is working incredibly hard on your behalf and the dues you spend every year are treated with miserly decision making and spent for what is best for this state. I thank each of the staff at NDHA and thank all of you for the opportunity to serve as board chair for the last two years.

Keith Heuser, NDHA Board Chair