

Rachael's Reflections: Embracing Growth, Connection, and Advocacy in Nursing

Rachael Frija, DNP, RN



As we step into a new year, I am filled with hope and determination for the future of our nursing profession. The recent American Nurses Association (ANA) Leadership Summit brought to light vital insights and reaffirmed the power of connection, collaboration, and innovation in addressing the challenges we face. Our Vice President, Jason Bloomer, MSN, RN, represented New Mexico nurses at the summit, where key discussions focused on fostering inclusive leadership, amplifying nurses' voices, and embracing the strength of diversity within our profession. One message stood out: the need to unite as a community to overcome workforce challenges, advocate for better conditions, and attract new members, including expanding membership to Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses (LPN/LVNs).

Tackling Chronic Challenges in Nursing

At the forefront of summit discussions were the chronic workforce challenges that nurses face daily—burnout, workplace violence, and staffing shortages. The ANA underscored the need for sus-

tainable solutions, including legislative advocacy for safe staffing, equitable pay, and accessible mental health resources.

Expanding Membership to Include LPNs

LPNs are integral to healthcare, representing over 960,000 professionals nationwide. The ANA's LPN-LVN Membership Report highlighted their significant contributions, primarily in direct patient care, and the barriers they often face, such as limited professional development opportunities and safety concerns. Pilot programs across the country demonstrate that offering tailored membership benefits—networking opportunities, career pathways, and continuing education—can strengthen our collective voice and foster inclusivity.

Here in New Mexico, we are proud to lead by example in welcoming LPNs into our professional community. NMNA offers LPN membership for just \$45 a year, providing a platform designed to empower, support, and connect LPNs across the state. This membership includes:

- Comprehensive Networking Opportunities: Connect with a diverse network of nurses at all levels of practice, from early-career professionals to seasoned leaders.
- Access to resources that enhance professional growth and support career advancement.

We recognize the invaluable contributions LPNs bring to New Mexico and are committed to addressing the barriers they face, such as limited professional development and representation.

Amplifying Nurses' Voices

One of the summit's key sessions, *Making Connections: Amplifying the Voices of Nurses*, emphasized the importance of using social and traditional media to advocate for nursing issues. By sharing personal stories, leveraging data, and engaging in public discussions, nurses can influence healthcare policy and reshape public perception of our profession.

Fostering Equity and Innovation

The ANA also emphasized the importance of creating inclusive workplaces and addressing systemic racism in nursing. Through initiatives like "Carving the Pathway to Equity," leaders are encouraged to foster diversity and support underrepresented groups in nursing. In addition, discussions on technological advancements, such as virtual care, provided strategies for integrating these tools into workflows while maintaining patient-centered care.

Preparing for the Future

The *Project Next Gen* initiative highlighted the need to recruit and retain the next generation of nurses by enhancing mentorship programs and strengthening partnerships with nursing schools. This effort is critical as we address the looming workforce gap and prepare for the future of nursing.

Building Conflict Competence

Another key focus of the summit was the importance of conflict competence in leadership. Developing skills such as active listening, emotional intelligence, and fostering a psychologically safe environment is essential for maintaining team cohesion and promoting innovation.

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Your Call to Action

I invite you to take action this year. Reach out to LPN colleagues, share the benefits of membership, and encourage them to join our professional community. Connect with your RN colleagues and encourage them to join or re-engage with NMNA. Let us amplify our voices, advocate for change, and embrace the power of inclusivity to ensure a stronger nursing profession for all.

Here is to a year of growth, connection, and collective success. Together, we can make 2025 a landmark year for New Mexico nurses. ■

Warm regards,

—*Rachael Frijia, DNP, RN,
NPD-BC, NEA-BC
President, New Mexico
Nurses Association*

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