

THE NACWA FAMILY – GETTING THROUGH THIS TOGETHER

BY KELLY BROCATO



It is not uncommon to hear NACWA CEO, Adam Krantz, say to a new member, “Welcome to the Family” or to a long-time member, “Thanks for being a part of our Family”. At NACWA, that’s how we think of the women and men who run our 300+ member utilities and nearly 150 affiliate companies, law firms and supporting organizations – the NACWA Family.

Without a doubt, the last five months have been a challenging time, but like so many families during this pandemic, we have found new ways to come together, stay connected and support one another through this crisis. In this time of distancing, NACWA ensured additional peer-to-peer connection and collaboration continued unabated. NACWA’s relentless advocacy in Washington, DC on behalf of our member agencies has had to be even more aggressive as opportunities continue to unfold with incredible speed. NACWA’s leadership and members have responded with unprecedented engagement and support, leveraging their influence with their Members of Congress and federal government agencies to advance a shared agenda.

Some key features of membership that play an integral role in bringing our members together during this time include:

- NACWA’s online *Engage* Network has hosted conversations that range from how to protect the utility workforce that remains working in-person, to how to prepare for the return to normal operations as well as multiple discussions on technical and communications issues.
- Complimentary webinars on a range of topics including pandemic response, legal and regulatory issues, pretreatment, strategic communications, and more have provided consistent opportunities to share and learn. Thousands of participants have engaged in these free offerings – expanding our audience far beyond the reach of our traditional in-person meetings.
- The Association’s dedicated COVID-19 Resource page which has provided templates to support utility continuity of operations and best practice documents shared by public agency members of all sizes nationwide.

- Monthly regulatory updates and frequent Advocacy Alerts have provided templates for contacting Congress regarding utility needs and information on the latest legislative and regulatory developments.
- Consistent media outreach and social media campaigns highlighting our members as Clean Water Heroes and bringing attention to issues such as Toilets Are Not Trashcans and funding gaps as they relate to utility service and infrastructure needs.

The value of NACWA is best summarized by the words of one of our members, Charles E. Hyland, Director of Mobile Area Water & Sewer System in Alabama, “The NACWA webinars, *Engage*, and other resources have been very helpful to me during these very challenging times. It is great to have others . . . take the time to share their thoughts, experiences and information to help us address our problems. I know they are all busy dealing with a variety of issues and it says a lot about the character of our members that they would share their time to help others.”

While we had hoped to be with the NACWA Family this summer celebrating our 50th Anniversary, sharing memories and accomplishments, we will come together next summer to celebrate our 50th anniversary and 2020 as a hallmark year of unity, collaboration, perseverance, and diversity as an association and a sector.

Staying strong despite separation – with members and staff working together to not only address these challenges but to come out the other side as a more effective sector – is the NACWA Family way.

Kelly Brocato is the Senior Director of Membership Development & Retention at NACWA.

STANDING UNITED.

As a Family, NACWA felt strongly that it could not remain silent in light of the racial justice issues in our country that have further come to light over the last several months. On June 4th, NACWA devoted its entire weekly *Current* to the following message of solidarity:

NACWA is devoting this issue of the *Current* to an expression of our solidarity with those seeking to end racism and all its forms of injustice in our country and who are demanding a move beyond the deep divisions that have far too often led to hatred, brutal violence and the unnecessary death of Black Americans.

Though NACWA does not in its normal course of business address such social issues, we feel an overwhelming sadness as a result of the ongoing turmoil in our country and the need to condemn the violence against Black Americans that have led us to this point. We want to express our unwavering support and solidarity too with members, staff and colleagues who have faced instances of discrimination and inequality.

NACWA stands united with those who yearn to be heard and valued — isn't this the ultimate and fundamental purpose of any association? As the country continues to find ways to move forward, we encourage you to share your ideas for how NACWA can improve itself in ways that can advance these aspirations and be part of a more permanent solution.

We recognize the limits of emails such as this; they are, frankly, easy to deliver and we recognize that the times we are living in require and demand much more.

Thank you for all you do and for considering this expression of solidarity during these harrowing times.

—NACWA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF