Greetings All,

What a great meeting and what a pleasure to see all of you, all of us, coming together as a group of dedicated volunteers committed to leading our vibrant and rewarding profession now and into the future.

Congratulations to our new AVMA president-elect, Dr. John Howe.

And a big thank you to Dr. Angela Demaree for the energy and enthusiasm she brought to her campaign and for waving the AVMA flag with pride.

Now, for the changing of the guard, or, as the saying goes, “out with the old and in with the new.”

As your immediate past president, I get the privilege and opportunity to share one last time with you my thoughts and perspectives gained from my years of involvement in organized veterinary medicine.

One of the world’s most noted philosophers, Yogi Berra, had a classic saying: “The future ain’t what it used to be.”

He was right—the future ain’t what it used to be, and I would say that is a good thing. This allows us to help guide and direct the future of veterinary medicine. This is what the AVMA is all about, and this is why you volunteer your time and resources.

Veterinary medicine continues to encounter changing societal and economic demands that challenge the identity and continued wellbeing of our profession.

The concerns and consequences surrounding practice economic viability, student debt, the veterinary work force, wellbeing, and changing demands for veterinary services impact how each of us views the future. These challenges are not new, but are compounding in such a way so to influence the direction of veterinary medicine.

At the candidate’s breakfast four years ago, I gave a personal illustration of the importance of the linchpin, which led me to make a statement I truly believe in.

I said, “The AVMA is the linchpin that holds the complexity of our profession together. We need to navigate with purpose and certainty.”

Our profession is complex, as we are intimately involved in many aspects of our societal structure.

That diversity is well represented by each of you and the 70-plus organizations in our House of Delegates.

With that diversity and complexity comes the need for an organizational structure and direction that keeps the AVMA on a course to maintain value and relevancy for our members and the veterinary profession.
It is good to see an assembly of colleagues before me that takes to heart a commitment to protect, promote, and advance the profession.

I also highlighted in my remarks three fundamentals I felt were important to the profession, which I referred to as “mile markers for success.”

These fundamentals were not necessarily new then, and they aren’t novel today. But it is worth repeating them to maintain our perspective and focus, and to acknowledge and reflect on the progress we have made together in addressing these areas.

The first mile marker: **Member Engagement**

Engagement is a two-way street. To maintain a vibrant and relevant Association, we must create compelling opportunities for member participation.

The second mile marker: **Leadership Development**

Dedicating resources to leadership development is a key component for the AVMA’s continued professional prominence. To quote author John C. Maxwell, “Leadership is learned daily. Not in a day.”

The third Mile marker: **Inclusion**

Inclusion is the act of embracing differences within a process or group. As an Association, being inclusive builds our community, supports our profession, and is essential to our future.

The veterinary profession is fortunate to have vast resources, and we must intentionally include our diversity in all aspects of our Association.

Let us remember these “mile markers”—Member Engagement, Leadership Development, and Inclusion. They have served us well in our deliberations as we make decisions affecting veterinary medicine.

We have made significant progress over the past several years, and are on the threshold of even greater things. I don’t have time to mention all the important efforts being implemented at the AVMA to advance member value. You’ve seen it here this week and at the VLC this past January.

We can be proud of the advances we are making in identifying, addressing, and resolving members’ needs and concerns, and implementing action steps as we navigate our future.

Those of you who were present four years ago may remember that I gifted a book to you from one of my favorite authors, John Maxwell, titled “Make Today Count.” I inscribed in it, “I am committed to making each day count for the AVMA.”

In my travels, I have experienced that commitment from many of you, as we as an Association continue to make great strides toward advancing animal health and welfare.

Together, Dr. Joe Kinnarney and I have experienced a lot of good things at the AVMA. We have shared with each other our belief that the future of the profession is in good hands.
The future of veterinary medicine is promising, and a culture of “let’s be resourceful, resilient, and responsive to our opportunities” is evident.

We are owning our profession.

As I close, I ask you to keep in mind that the AVMA is you, the collective voice for the profession. And that is why the AVMA is the linchpin of the profession; it is made stronger because each of you are that linchpin.

This is our passion. This is our profession. This is our AVMA.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and represent you all these years.

Thank you for your dedication and engagement. Keep up the good work and stay well.

Thank you.