Members of the House, colleagues, and friends,

Serving as your president-elect has been a fantastic experience. I can't believe how quickly the year has gone. As I prepare to assume the AVMA presidency, I want to thank you for putting your trust in me and for allowing me to represent the AVMA both at home and abroad.

I could not have done this without the support of my wife, Diane, who has been by my side every step of the way. Thank you, Diane.

I also want to thank our great AVMA staff for their reliable assistance and for always keeping me well-prepared for my travels and my meetings. Their knowledge and expertise on issues within the veterinary profession keep this Association running like a well-oiled machine. We are truly blessed to have such a dedicated, hardworking team, and I look forward to working with them in the coming year.

I want to also give a shout out to our veterinarians and veterinary technicians in the uniformed services.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the 65th annual International Military Veterinary Medical and One Health Symposium. While there, I was reminded of how the work of our uniformed services veterinarians is so very critical to our success as a profession and as a nation.

Whether it’s general practice or specialty fields or all areas of public health, we have the best trained military veterinarians in the world, and we are all indebted to them for their service and are proud of their efforts.

For that reason, we need to continue our work to help restore the “star” to the Chief of the Army Veterinary Corps. The veterinary corps must be represented at the table when it comes to discussions about policy and other issues, and it’s important that they have the authority and status needed to carry out their mission.

During my travels, I am always impressed by the great diversity of our profession. Many people do not realize the extent to which veterinary medicine impacts their daily lives. And so, I want to continue the great work Dr. de Jong has done in helping educate the public on all that we do so they will have a greater understanding and appreciation of the breadth of our profession in so many different areas.

We also need to continue our efforts as a leader in the One Health movement, and work with physicians on issues common to both animal and human medicine. In my conversations with physicians, I find that they are always amazed at our diagnostic capabilities and how ahead of the game we are on issues like tickborne illnesses. As veterinarians, it is important that we remain committed to promoting the health of all species and the many places in which they live, and continue to promote One Health to our fellow health care professionals.

Our profession would not be what it is today without the support of our veterinary technicians. Members of the House, you made a wise decision in asking the Board to form a task force on the utilization of veterinary technicians, and we all look forward to their findings. I have witnessed firsthand the importance of technicians to the daily function of veterinary practices as well as their key roles in preserving animal health and welfare. Veterinary technicians help make veterinary medicine as special as it is, and I look forward to continued discussions about improving the utilization of these critical members of the veterinary team.

As AVMA president, I also will focus on member communications. We have greatly improved in this area, thanks to the efforts of the AVMA’s Marketing and Communications Division. Both our membership and our member satisfaction rates are at an all-time high. And, over the past year, we have seen many lapsed members rejoin the AVMA.
We must continue communicating to our members what this Association can do and is doing for them to drive those numbers even higher. This involves, in part, making your constituents feel empowered and engaged by seeking their opinions about important issues addressed during our Veterinary Information Forums.

It also involves spreading the word about important AVMA perks like the world-class continuing education opportunities we have available here at the AVMA Convention, as well as the Veterinary Leadership Conference and our new digital education platform, AVMA Axon.

Together, I am confident that we will continue making the AVMA the best it can be for our members by learning more about our members and their needs.

I appreciate all your hard work in making this a productive and successful meeting.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to a productive year ahead.