
D. Troy Tuke

Position Sought: President-elect

Candidate Q&A

1. How would you describe your leadership style, and how has it influenced your work in EMS?

Looking back over my career in EMS, my leadership style has shaped almost everything about the way I work, the way I teach, and the way I support the people around me. I've always seen myself as a servant leader, and those core values—being transparent, acting with integrity, and putting the team first—have guided me through every role I've held.

Transparency has always mattered to me. EMS is stressful enough without wondering what's happening behind the scenes. I've found that when I'm open about decisions, changes, and the reasons behind them, people feel more grounded. They're more willing to buy in, ask questions, and help move things forward. Being upfront builds trust, and trust is everything in this profession.

Integrity is another piece that has shaped how I lead. EMS teams need leaders who are steady, fair, and consistent—especially when things get complicated. I've always tried to do the right thing for the right reason, even when it's hard or unpopular. Over time, that consistency has helped me earn credibility with my teams. They know I'm not making decisions based on ego or convenience; I'm doing what's best for the people and the community we serve.

Putting the team's needs first has probably had the biggest impact on my leadership. EMS is a team sport. Nobody succeeds alone. I've always believed that part of my job is helping people grow, giving them opportunities, and letting them be part of the process. When you involve people in planning and problem solving, they take ownership. They feel valued. And they start developing into leaders themselves. Delegation isn't about handing off tasks—it's about building confidence and capability.

One thing I've learned over the years is that explaining the “why” behind decisions changes everything. When people understand the purpose, they're more motivated, more engaged, and more willing to push through challenges. It reduces the need for micromanagement because the team isn't just following instructions—they're aligned with the mission. In EMS, that alignment directly affects patient care, teamwork, and the overall health of the organization.

Servant leadership has helped me build strong teams, navigate change, and create environments where people feel supported and empowered. It's influenced how I show up every day and how I try to make a difference, not just in the organization, but in the community we serve. At the end of the day, leadership in EMS isn't about titles or authority. It's about serving people well and helping them succeed.

2. In what ways do you advocate for EMS? What strategies would you recommend for NAEMT to strengthen its advocacy efforts and gain recognition for EMS as an essential service?

My time in the EMS profession has given me a clear vision of where our EMS system shines, and where it struggles. That's what pushed me into formal advocacy roles with NAEMT, first as Nevada's

Advocacy State Coordinator and later as Chair of the NAEMT Advocacy Committee. Those positions gave me a front row seat to how decisions get made and how important it is for EMS to have a steady, informed voice at the table.

For me, advocacy starts with relationships. I've always believed you can't just show up when you need something. You have to build trust long before you're asking a legislator to support a bill or fund a program. I try to make it a point to meet with leaders regularly, share what's happening in EMS, and connect them with the people doing the work every day. When lawmakers understand the realities of EMS, staffing shortages, reimbursement challenges, the sheer volume of calls, they're much more willing to listen and help.

Another big part of how I advocate is by helping EMS practitioners feel comfortable speaking up. A lot of clinicians want to be involved but don't know where to start. I felt that way the first several visits to the hill and in district with my own elected representatives. I've worked to share the lessons I have and continue to learn in regard to advocacy with my fellow EMS providers. Teaching people how the legislative process works, how to use NAEMT's advocacy tools, and how to tell their story in a way that resonates are just a few examples. When EMS professionals realize their voice matters, advocacy stops feeling intimidating and starts feeling more natural and an important piece of the job.

NAEMT does a great job already in the advocacy arena. If I were recommending strategies for NAEMT to strengthen its advocacy efforts, I'd focus on these three things. First, keep the conversation going year round. Hill Day is great, but it shouldn't be the only time lawmakers hear from us. Regular updates, district visits, and coordinated messaging across states would help keep EMS issues on their radar.

Second, double down on grassroots education. Short, easy to access training modules, mentorship programs, and stronger state level advocacy teams would make it easier for clinicians to get involved. The more people speaking up, the louder and more unified our message becomes.

Third, NAEMT should continue pushing hard for EMS to be recognized as an essential service. That means consistent national messaging, partnerships with other healthcare organizations, and a clear explanation of what "essential service" actually means for funding, workforce stability, and community protection. EMS already functions as an essential service, now we need the laws and policies to match reality.

At the end of the day, advocacy is about making sure EMS gets the respect, support, and recognition it deserves. With stronger relationships, involved practitioners, and a unified national voice, NAEMT can help make that happen.

3. How can NAEMT better support and develop the EMS workforce, considering generational differences? How would you convey the value of membership to both current and prospective members?

The EMS workforce is more generationally diverse than ever, and that diversity is one of our greatest strengths, if we can harness it. Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and now Gen Z all show up to this profession with different expectations, communication styles, and motivations. For NAEMT, supporting and developing the EMS workforce means recognizing those differences and building programs that speak to each group in a way that feels relevant and authentic.

For example, many of our seasoned providers value structure, loyalty, and the chance to pass on what they've learned. NAEMT can tap into that by expanding mentorship opportunities, instructor development, and leadership roles that let them shape the next generation. Gen X tends to appreciate autonomy and efficiency, so offering flexible continuing education, streamlined certification processes, and practical advocacy tools fits their style. Millennials want growth, feedback, and meaningful work. They respond to competency based education, leadership pathways, and opportunities to get involved

in national initiatives. And Gen Z, our newest wave, expects transparency, digital learning, and clear advancement opportunities. They thrive when they can see how their work connects to a bigger mission.

I believe that's where NAEMT shines! We're uniquely positioned to bridge these generational expectations and help agencies build a workforce that feels supported, valued, and heard. Whether it's through continued competency education, wellness initiatives, leadership development, or advocacy training, NAEMT can help EMS practitioners at every career stage feel like they have a place and a future in this profession.

Conveying the value of NAEMT membership follows the same logic: speak to what matters most to each generation while keeping the core message consistent. For current members, it's about reinforcing the impact of our advocacy work, the quality of our education, and the strength of our national community. For prospective members, especially younger practitioners, it's about showing them that NAEMT is the gateway to career growth, national involvement, and a voice in shaping the future of EMS.

My own experience as Nevada's State Advocacy Coordinator and later as Chair of the NAEMT Advocacy Committee taught me just how powerful that voice can be. Working with state and federal leaders, helping practitioners engage in Hill Day, and elevating issues that matter to EMS professionals showed me firsthand that NAEMT membership isn't just a card, it's influence, connection, and purpose. When we communicate that clearly, across all generations, we strengthen not only NAEMT but the entire EMS profession.

4. What is a pressing issue currently facing EMS, and how could NAEMT help address it?

One of the most pressing issues facing EMS today is the growing workforce shortage. It's not a new problem, but it's become more urgent than ever. Agencies across the country are struggling to recruit and retain EMTs and paramedics, and the reasons are pretty familiar to anyone who's worked in the field, burnout, low wages, long hours, and the constant pressure to meet response time expectations that don't always match the realities of modern EMS. When you combine all that with increasing call volumes and limited reimbursement, you end up with a system that's stretched thin and a workforce that's exhausted.

What makes this issue so challenging is that it affects everything else. When staffing is short, response times go up, morale goes down, and the quality of care can suffer, not because providers don't care, but because they're being asked to do more with less. And the truth is, EMS has been operating in this "do more with less" mindset for decades. At some point, something has to give.

This is where NAEMT can play a major role. One of the biggest strengths of NAEMT is its ability to bring national attention to issues that individual agencies struggle to elevate on their own. Workforce stability isn't just a local problem; it's a national one. NAEMT can help address it by continuing to push for sustainable funding models that allow EMS agencies to pay competitive wages, invest in mental health resources, and modernize their operations. Advocacy for programs like Treatment in Place and mobile integrated healthcare is a huge part of that. When agencies aren't financially dependent on transport based reimbursement, they can focus more on patient needs and less on chasing revenue.

NAEMT can also help by promoting evidence based system redesign. We all know that not every call needs lights and sirens or an ALS response, yet many systems still operate under outdated expectations. By championing data driven approaches, NAEMT can help agencies rethink deployment models, reduce unnecessary stress on providers, and improve job satisfaction. When people feel like their work makes sense, and that the system supports them, they're more likely to stay.

Finally, NAEMT can strengthen the EMS workforce by expanding leadership development, continuing education, and competency based training. EMS practitioners want to grow, and they want to feel valued. Creating clear career pathways and modernizing education helps build a stronger, more confident workforce.

In short, the workforce shortage is one of the most pressing issues in EMS today, and NAEMT is uniquely positioned to help address it through advocacy, education, and system redesign. When EMS practitioners feel supported, respected, and empowered, the entire system benefits, from providers to patients to communities.