



2024 Questions to NAEMT Board Candidates

Please include your response below each question. Please limit each answer to 500 words or less. Thanks.

Candidate: Rommie L. Duckworth MPA, LP, EFO, FO

Questions for 2024 Election Candidates

1. Please describe your leadership style.

My leadership style is grounded in four key principles that I have cultivated through years of experience in EMS and related fields. These principles have shaped my approach to leadership and would continue to guide me as Director of NAEMT's Northeast Region.

First, listening is at the core of effective leadership. Just as any good responder assesses a situation before acting, a leader must first understand the issues at hand by actively listening. This means engaging with colleagues, members, and stakeholders to hear their concerns, not just relying on personal perspectives. Every EMS professional has a unique experience, and understanding the diversity of those experiences is essential in crafting effective solutions.

Second, focus is critical in a field where challenges come from every direction. While it's tempting to try to solve all problems at once, spreading resources too thin can lead to weak results. I believe in prioritizing issues and concentrating efforts to ensure meaningful progress is made where it's most needed. Focused leadership allows us to tackle challenges efficiently and maximize impact.

Next is follow-through. The dynamic nature of EMS means that problems often evolve, and leaders must adapt. It's not enough to start an initiative; true leadership is about seeing it through to completion, especially when the path becomes difficult or unglamorous. Consistency and perseverance are essential in addressing the complex, long-term challenges our field faces.

Finally, communication is vital to keeping the team informed and engaged. EMS providers don't always need to know every detail, but they do need clear communication about the problems being addressed and the progress being made. Members of the NAEMT deserve transparency about where their dues are

going and reassurance that their voices are heard. Regular follow-up helps maintain trust and fosters a sense of unity and purpose.

In summary, my leadership is guided by these four principles: listening first, maintaining focus, ensuring follow-through, and communicating effectively. As Director of NAEMT's Northeast Region, these principles will guide my efforts to serve the membership and our profession with integrity and commitment.

2. How do you advocate on behalf of EMS in your local area or state? How would you recommend NAEMT strengthen its grassroots advocacy efforts and increase involvement by EMS practitioners?

In my local area and state, I have been actively involved in advocating for EMS improvements on both clinical and legislative fronts. Clinically, I have spearheaded several pilot programs aimed at improving EMS response to cardiac arrest. These initiatives are rooted in the latest research, allowing us to enhance patient outcomes without waiting for years for national resuscitation guidelines to be updated. Additionally, at the state level, I have played a key role in working with our Office of EMS to update educational standards for EMS instructors. I also helped develop the Sepsis Alerts and Systems of Care protocols and testified before the state legislature to advocate for the inclusion of EMS in stroke systems of care, underscoring the vital role EMS plays in patient outcomes.

At the national level, I have consistently participated in NAEMT's EMS Day on the Hill, where I meet one-on-one with state legislators and their staff in Washington, D.C. These meetings have been an opportunity to educate lawmakers on the challenges EMS clinicians face and advocate for improved compensation, a safer work environment, and greater recognition of EMS professionals.

As a current NAEMT board member, I have worked to enhance our direct engagement with EMS providers across states. While we've made progress, there is still room for improvement in grassroots advocacy. I believe that strengthening our presence at state conferences and fostering closer ties with state EMS associations will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges providers face. Face-to-face engagement is required to build trust and ensure that NAEMT's advocacy efforts align with the wants and needs of our members.

To further strengthen NAEMT's grassroots advocacy efforts, I will work to expand our outreach by encouraging more direct regional and local involvement by NAEMT Board Members.

3. EMS continuing education is moving in a continued competency direction. What are your thoughts on how NAEMT education can best meet the competency needs of practitioners in the field?

EMS providers work hard every day, and the last thing they need is to struggle to find quality education programs that meet their continuing competency requirements. As the field of EMS moves toward a competency-based model, it is critical that NAEMT continues to offer education that is not only accessible but also truly impactful in enhancing the skills of practitioners in the field.

Continued competency is about much more than passing a quiz or fulfilling a checklist. It means ensuring that EMS professionals are equipped with the knowledge and practical skills to provide care that makes a real difference in patient outcomes. NAEMT should focus on delivering education programs that go beyond meeting recertification requirements. These programs must provide a high-quality, hands-on learning experience that helps practitioners stay sharp, confident, and ready to handle the complex, evolving challenges they face in the field.

To best meet the competency needs of EMS professionals, NAEMT education should incorporate more scenario-based training, real-world simulations, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. This approach will ensure that the education is not only relevant but also engaging and applicable to day-to-day operations. Additionally, NAEMT should focus on creating programs that are adaptable to various regions, ensuring that local protocols and the unique needs of different communities are considered.

If elected, I will prioritize enhancing NAEMT's education offerings to ensure they are of the highest quality, offering EMS providers the practical, up-to-date training they deserve. My goal would be to make continuing education a valuable, enriching experience, empowering EMS professionals to grow in their careers while providing the best possible care to their patients.

4. What is a pressing hot topic in EMS and why is it important to you? How might NAEMT address it?

The most pressing crisis facing EMS providers today is recruitment and retention. This issue affects not only EMS leaders striving to keep their organizations running and meet the healthcare needs of their communities, but also every EMT and paramedic grappling with the demands of the profession and contemplating leaving it. For many providers, the challenge lies in staying engaged in a field where compensation and career growth opportunities are limited.

*While NAEMT must continue to support organizations in their outreach and engagement efforts, the solution to recruitment and retention must fundamentally address two key factors: **increased compensation** and **a clear, functional career path** for EMS professionals. The fragmented structure of EMS in the United States, with its diverse array of private, public, and hospital-based systems, presents a significant barrier to creating viable long-term career opportunities. Without a unified framework that offers competitive wages and defined paths for advancement, EMS will continue to struggle with staffing shortages and burnout.*

NAEMT, as the leading national voice for EMS providers, is uniquely positioned to advocate for the systemic changes necessary to make EMS a more sustainable and rewarding career. This includes pushing for legislative and policy reforms that prioritize fair compensation, benefits, and career development opportunities for EMS professionals. NAEMT can also play a critical role in raising public awareness about the essential work EMS providers do, making the case for why they deserve not only recognition but also the financial and professional support to thrive in their roles.

If elected, I would advocate for NAEMT to continue and expand its efforts to educate policymakers, industry leaders, and the public about the urgent need to restructure EMS systems. By making EMS a more viable, attractive, and sustainable career, we can not only solve the recruitment and retention crisis but also ensure that our communities receive the high-quality emergency care they deserve.

-Rommie L. Duckworth, MPA. LP, EFO, FO