



2025 Board Election: Candidate Q&A

Candidate Name: Dennis Scales NRP, IN PM-PI, TN PM-CC I/C

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

- My leadership style was not something I learned from a textbook, but was instead forged in the crucible of military service. The Army taught me that effective leadership is not about barking orders from a position of authority, but about the collective strength of a unit. At the heart of this philosophy is a fundamental belief: teamwork is the cornerstone of all success. A leader's primary responsibility is not just to direct, but to cultivate an environment where every individual, regardless of rank or experience, is encouraged to train and learn together as a unified team. This collaborative approach recognizes that the strongest units are those where every member feels invested in a shared mission and is empowered to contribute to the group's overall success.
- This principle extends beyond mere collaboration and into a relentless pursuit of excellence through continuous training. From my earliest days as a paramedic, I understood that the quality of care we provided was directly tied to our collective skill level. I always encouraged my partners and coworkers to pursue more education, knowing that every new skill and piece of knowledge we acquired made us a better, more capable team. We were not just individuals on an ambulance; we were a life-saving unit. This drive for shared improvement meant that we were not only prepared for routine calls but were also capable of handling complex, high-stakes situations with confidence and precision. The goal was never to be the best "me" I could be, but to ensure we were the best "we" we could be.
- As my career progressed and I transitioned into a training role, my focus on collaborative development became even more pronounced. In this new capacity, I have made a conscious effort to encourage and facilitate a culture of learning. This means not only making sure that required education is accessible and straightforward, but also actively seeking out and promoting additional training opportunities. I work to lower the barriers to entry for advanced certifications and specialized courses, making it as easy as possible for everyone on the team to advance their skills. By raising the standard for one person, we inevitably raise the standard for everyone. The result is a team of highly skilled professionals who are not only competent but also committed to each other's growth. This philosophy of shared learning, born in the Army, has become the guiding force of my professional life, proving that a leader's true strength lies in the strength of their team.

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?

- The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) has a powerful role to play in shaping the future of emergency medical services (EMS), but its greatest

potential lies not in top-down federal lobbying, but in a ground-up, grassroots approach. As someone who has personally engaged with local officials on issues ranging from EMS response protocols to broader public health concerns, I have learned that genuine, lasting change begins at the community level. My experiences have shown that while national policy is important, it is local advocacy that truly resonates with elected officials, who have a direct and personal connection to the daily lives and well-being of their constituents. The NAEMT should prioritize empowering its members to become local advocates, creating a ripple effect of positive change that can eventually influence state and national conversations.

- Effective local advocacy goes beyond simply voicing complaints; it involves proactive engagement and tangible projects. I have had the privilege of organizing health fairs, clinics and a First Aid project for a local school system. These initiatives served as more than just community service; they were a demonstration of the value and expertise that EMS professionals bring to public health. By taking part in these events, I was able to build relationships with community leaders and local officials, making it easier to discuss broader concerns. This hands-on approach builds trust and credibility, showing that advocates are not just focused on a single agenda but are invested in the holistic health of the community. It is a model that the NAEMT can champion, providing resources and training to its members to help them initiate similar projects.
- The power of starting small is that it allows for focused, meaningful dialogue. When you approach a local council member or mayor, they are more likely to listen because the issue directly affects the people they serve. These local victories—a new public health initiative, improved EMS funding, or better access to training—can serve as proof-of-concept for a larger scale. As more communities across a state see success with NAEMT-supported grassroots campaigns, a powerful coalition will naturally form. This bottom-up momentum is far more compelling to state and federal legislators than any generic lobbying effort. It transforms a legislative agenda from an abstract idea into a proven, community-backed movement.
- To that end, the NAEMT should focus on providing its members with the tools for local government advocacy. This could include educational guides on how to approach local officials, templates for public health presentations, or even small grants to fund community-based projects. The goal should be to cultivate a network of empowered, local EMS leaders who can share their stories and experiences directly with those who hold the purse strings and make policy decisions. By strengthening its local advocacy efforts, the NAEMT will not only advance the profession but also create a more resilient, well-informed, and healthier nation, one community at a time.

3. How can NAEMT better support and develop the EMS workforce, particularly newer generations? How would you convey the value of membership to both current and future members?

- NAEMT can better support the EMS workforce by focusing on professional development, advocacy, and fostering a sense of community. To convey the value of membership, NAEMT must highlight how it directly benefits both an EMS provider's career and their everyday life.
- NAEMT should focus on several key areas. First, they need to expand access to high-quality, modern education. This means not just offering traditional courses, but also providing online, on-demand training that fits the busy and often unpredictable schedules. These courses should be affordable and focus on skills that are both clinically

relevant and crucial for career advancement, like MIH, critical care, and leadership training.

- Second, NAEMT should champion stronger advocacy at the state and national levels. New generations of EMS providers are passionate about improving their profession. NAEMT can empower them by providing tools on how to advocate for better pay, improved benefits, mental health support, and a safer work environment. By amplifying the voices of its members, NAEMT demonstrates its commitment to tangible change, not just rhetoric.
- A crucial component is community and mentorship. This profession can be isolating, especially for new providers. NAEMT should create more opportunities for mentorship programs, networking events, and online forums where new and seasoned providers can connect and offer support. This builds a strong professional identity and helps new members feel like they're part of a larger, supportive family.
- To attract and retain members, NAEMT needs to clearly articulate the value proposition. The messaging should be tailored to different generations, but the core benefits remain the same:
- The message to current members should focus on sustaining and enhancing their careers. Highlight the ongoing advocacy efforts that protect their jobs and improve their working conditions. Emphasize the value of exclusive member discounts on everything from professional liability insurance and continuing education to everyday items. Remind them that their membership directly supports the mission to elevate the entire profession. They are not just paying dues; they are investing in their future and the future of EMS. To newer generations, the value of NAEMT membership is about building a strong foundation for a long-term career. The message should be: "NAEMT is your partner in success."
- Highlight the education discounts and scholarships that make it easier to pursue certifications and degrees. Mention the leadership opportunities on committees or in local chapters that help them develop skills beyond patient care.
- Frame NAEMT as a supportive network that understands the unique challenges of the job. Mention resources like mental health support programs and networking events. Show them that NAEMT is actively fighting for their rights and well-being, from better pay to a safer work environment.
- Emphasize that their membership gives them a seat at the table. Explain that by joining, they become part of a powerful, unified voice that can influence policy and shape the future.
- By clearly communicating these benefits and aligning its initiatives with the needs of a modern, diverse workforce, NAEMT can ensure its continued relevance and support the next generation of life-saving EMS providers.

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

- The most pressing issue currently facing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a severe and persistent workforce crisis. This challenge encompasses a trifecta of problems: low pay, high rates of burnout, and significant recruitment and retention shortfalls. National surveys have repeatedly shown that many EMS agencies lack sufficient staff to meet 911 call demands, leading to delayed response times and increased risks for patients. Factors such as a stagnant economic model, demanding work schedules, and a lack of recognition as an essential public service contribute to a high turnover rate as

professionals seek more sustainable careers with better pay and benefits. This crisis threatens the foundational infrastructure of emergency care in communities across the nation.

- NAEMT, as the leading professional organization for EMS practitioners, is uniquely positioned to help address this crisis. Its primary role is advocacy, and it can leverage its influence to lobby for federal legislation that secures appropriate and sustainable funding for EMS. This includes advocating for the "Protecting Access to Ground Ambulance Medical Services Act" to extend add-on payments and the "EMS Counts Act" to ensure the profession is accurately represented in federal data. These legislative efforts are crucial for building an economic model that allows agencies to offer competitive wages and benefits.
- Beyond legislative advocacy, NAEMT can combat the crisis through enhanced professional development and public awareness. By expanding educational resources on mental health and resilience, the organization can provide practitioners with the tools needed to combat burnout. Furthermore, through public awareness campaigns like its "Workforce Development" initiative, NAEMT can highlight the value of EMS professionals as highly skilled healthcare providers. This not only helps with recruitment but also elevates the profession's standing in the eyes of policymakers and the public, reinforcing the need for fair compensation and proper funding. By taking a multi-faceted approach of legislative advocacy, education, and public awareness, NAEMT can play a pivotal role in creating a more sustainable future for the EMS workforce.