NEHA has taken a first step in the process of claiming its seat at the table and leading the nation to better environmental health.

Greetings from Washington, DC! Congressman John Dingell, who served for over 40 years in the House of Representatives, famously said of Washington, DC, “If you aren’t at the table, you are on the menu.” Washington, DC, is a tough town where everyone thinks their issue is the top priority. With the opening of a DC office, NEHA has taken a first step in the process of claiming its seat at the table and leading the nation to better environmental health.

This couldn’t have happened at a more opportune time as 2016 is a critical year for legislation. This may come as a surprise to some since it’s an election year and there will be a new president and Congress after November. As Washington, DC, insiders know, however, every incoming administration wants to start a host of new initiatives in its first 100 days in office, when it has momentum generated from the recent election. The only successful way to keep that pace is to review what has been debated, discussed, and garnered political support during the previous Congress. It’s for this reason that 2016 could not be a more important time to introduce NEHA to Congress and start the ball rolling toward increased appropriations for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Environmental Health, Toxic Substance Control Act reauthorization, Food Safety Modernization Act, and others.

As a policy wonk and health care political junkie with 20-plus years in Washington, DC, politics, I am thrilled to be joining the NEHA family. I have worked for clients making them thought-leaders in Washington, DC, and protecting their interests on Capitol Hill; assisted the Health Resources and Services Administration in navigating the Affordable Care Act (ACA) debate and worked with the Department of Health and Human Services in implementation of ACA; helped nonprofits increase their appropriations and stature in Washington, DC; and worked as senior staff for two members of Congress. I have my master’s degree in public health and international relations policy.

Using my political expertise, especially my skills in and with the executive and legislative branches, I will get your stories and experiences in environmental health in front of key decision makers. Together, with the national office at the helm, we will be an unstoppable team.

But I can’t do it without you! I will need your data and best practices. And even more important, I want to know if your mother’s best friend’s neighbor or you have relationships of any kind with folks in Congress, the current administration, or the presidential candidates. These relationships—even if you think they are inconsequential or that they will never remember you—can be a game changer for our advocacy.

As for the data and stories, I’m looking to build a compelling narrative about how your work has improved the lives of people in your community. Success stories and lessons learned from the field are critical to my work. If we can tell members of Congress that we could have done “X” before the city of Flint changed its water supply to the Flint River or provided 9/11 first responders with “Y” before rescue and recovery efforts in New

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FOCUSING ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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