

Dear Members,

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to Chief Kevin Gordon on his leadership over the last two years as President. Chief Gordon, in typical fashion, successfully led our organization through some key decisions that the board encountered as we came out of COVID and started to adapt to the new normal in the various realms that the Association must work in.

We realize that we are still facing unprecedented challenges to a level that we have not experienced before in the fire service. Prices are rapidly accelerating and extended delivery times on apparatus, PPE, and other critical equipment continues to be an issue. Both paid and volunteer departments are navigating the diminishing pool of volunteers and those looking for a career in the fire service. Regardless of these and other obstacles, we will continue to evolve and adapt just the way the fire service has done throughout our history.

In order to move us forward, I am focusing my presidential initiatives on not only fostering the Association's current key relationships but also forging new ones with groups that the Association has not undertaken previously. Strong relationships are paramount to the success of our individual departments and the fire service as a whole.

For over 90 years, the NCAFC has worked alongside our state's fire service to overcome the challenges from the integration of EMS, Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, Community Risk Reduction, and the list goes on. This enduring, can-do attitude has served our profession well, and our future accomplishments will depend on our willingness to embrace new operational models for service delivery.

Regardless of our titles, positions, or roles, we all have one thing in common--to serve our communities. Our culture of service is not new—it has been passed down to us from prior generations. I am reminded by the late Chief Bobby Halton who stated, "All firefighters are leaders". Every member of the North Carolina fire service has a key role in the future of our profession. Leadership is a mindset, not a title.

Your Executive Board is committed to providing timely resources, offering educational opportunities for our leaders of the fire and emergency services, and engaging on various legislative issues.

I would like to wish you all the best as we begin another year of opportunity and growth for the North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs. Please do not hesitate to contact any Executive Board Member or Association Staff if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

Respectfully,

Deputy Chief Derrick S. Clouston

President 2023-2024