



American Correctional Association

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August 29, 2023

ACA Members,

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the American Correctional Association's 153rd Congress of Corrections in Philadelphia! I hope you found multiple workshops, wellness activities, special sessions, committee meetings and/or other events at the Congress that helped you feel renewed, recharged, and in possession of new tools for your professional development.

I also hope you were able to attend the General Session on Friday to hear **Sugar Ray Leonard**, boxing legend, entrepreneur, speaker and author. He shared that having the discipline, focus, determination, preparation, perseverance, and the right attitude were the keys to his success. He told the audience that anyone can apply the same qualities and tools that have driven him to success in their own lives, I found it so meaningful to watch the clips of some of Sugar Ray Leonard's most iconic boxing matches while hearing him talk about the incredible preparation and practice he put into training for them.

ACA makes a special effort to have a nationally known speaker at each Winter Conference and at the Congress of Corrections. The variety of speakers has been incredible over the years. Each one has sparked memories, made us laugh, and been inspiring. I've gone from wondering what a celebrity has to say to corrections professionals to wondering what nuggets and insights I'll be able to walk away with this time. It's something I look forward to at every conference.

Of course, another major part of the General Session was the tribute to **James A. Gondles, Jr., who retired from serving as ACA Executive Director** at the end of the 153rd Congress of Corrections. He was honored in a number of different ways during the Congress. As ACA's Executive Director from 1990 to 2023, Jim had a tremendous impact on the corrections profession, and he will be missed.

Rob Green is the new Executive Director of ACA. I'm not sure if Rob got any sleep at all during the Congress because he was working so hard to try to be everywhere and find time to talk with virtually each person in attendance. Throughout the Congress of Correction, the ACA Executive Committee, Past Presidents Council, Board of Governors, Delegate Assembly, ACA members, and Jim Gondles himself have consistently affirmed having the utmost confidence in Rob's ability to take the helm at ACA and lead the association into its next chapter.

I hope each member of ACA will join me in thanking Jim Gondles for his service and welcoming Rob Green as Executive Director and wishing them both the very best in their new roles.

Changing to a new Executive Director is something ACA has not done in 32 years. It is a significant change, and it is an honor to serve as your President during this time. Change is inevitable – in all aspects of life. Experience has shown me that relying on the underlying

continuity of care that is at the root of our personal and professional life can carry us through these changes. **ACA has a 153-year history of continually caring for and meeting the needs of corrections professionals and I am confident that ACA has a very bright future.**

Please do not mistake my confidence for complacency, however. **Positioning ACA for the future is essential.** As I look around, I see that Jim's retirement is just one of a wave of retirements. Between now and 2030, 75 million Baby Boomers (who comprise 25% of the workforce) are expected to retire. It is the job of the current leadership to ensure that ACA is meeting the needs and expectations of tomorrow's leaders.

This can only be accomplished with **your input.** We need to know:

- What workshops/activities at recent conferences were especially applicable to your professional development?
- What have been the most interesting/helpful parts of ACA conferences?
- What workshops and topics would you like to see at future conferences?
- What other things would you like to see at future ACA Conferences?
- What did you like or dislike in the exhibit area?
- If you have been unable to attend a recent conference, what could we do to make it easier for you to come in the future?
- What parts of ACA as a whole do you find most valuable to you and to your organization and how can we build on those to make ACA even better?

Please send your thoughts about these questions and/or your insights into the ways ACA can be strengthened to President@aca.org.

When I think about the future of ACA and the corrections profession, I am excited to see what comes next. I am eager to learn what the different committees are working on, what the priorities are for different correctional systems, what new programs/services are available to address the changing needs of individuals in our correctional facilities, collaborations are in the works, how our members are integrating wellness into their workplaces, etc.

We cannot get to that bright future for ACA without you. **We need to know what you expect and desire from ACA and we need your commitment to help ACA get there.** Thank you, in advance, for being a part of that process and thank you for choosing to be a corrections professional.

In service,



Denise M. Robinson
108th President, American Correctional Association