CSAVR

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General Session 1

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>> LISA HINSON‑HATZ: Good morning! Good morning, everyone. We're going to give you two minutes to find a see the, hello Craig McManus! Let everybody settle in.

Well, good morning, everyone. Good California morning! Hello! Hey! How is everybody? That didn't sound very good for a California morning. Look at it outside! How are you guys doing?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Great!

>> LISA HINSON‑HATZ: Good, that's better! So good morning, I'm Lisa Hinson‑Hatz I'm the state VR director for New Hampshire combined here to welcome you to a very, very full house. First of all thank you all for registering, thank you to RSA for bringing quite a few folks with you which is great to help us as we really navigate through implementation here the first few months after having final regulations. They're on my desk. Not that I'm trying to gain any RSA brownie points or anything, but I did bring them with me so if anyone would like to have a view.

I'm happy to be here. I'm really honored to be the President this year during so much change. It's constant change! One of the things that we really have been speaking about with CSAVR and the other directors is not just managing change but leading change and we feel that VR is in the best position right now with everybody in this room and the folks that aren't here with us to lead that change. We want to really make a difference for our two customers, individuals with disabilities and our business partners.

So I'm not going to take a long time today but I want to welcome you all. I'm happy to be here. I'm going to hand it over to Joe Xavier who is going to give you a nice, warm welcome from the state of California. So, welcome, Joe!
(Applause.)

>> JOE XAVIER: Good morning! It's great to have all of you here in California. So we are, of course, known as the "golden state" and it's good for all of you to come here and to see many of the things that we have here, beautiful weather! You can experience for the week that you are here the high will be from seven 0 to 79. I'm sure that will be stressful for some of you, used to some drastic temperature changes. California of course is known for the Golden Gate Bridge so if you get to make it to San Francisco you get to see that, Hollywood, the entertainment capital of the world, where movies and TV shows are made and of course our beaches! I know many of you think that in California we do nothing but sit on the beach all day long even though we have 760 miles of beaches that's not the case. We have many of our mountain and valleys and certainly our language diversity. 40% of Californians speak a language other than English, 26% of Californians speak Spanish and, of course, we have famous people, some of you may have heard of Julia Child's, Joe DiMaggio and Richard Nixon all from California. Even though California has 18 professional sports teams, I don't have a title to brag about this year.
(Chuckles.)

So I do have to congratulate the Cubbies!
(Applause.)

Yes! And I do so but I don't like it because they beat the stuffing out of my Giants! So some local attractions here, balance low park, a 1200‑acre park that has many attractions. For those of you that prefer an aquatic scene we have Sea World, we have the Midway museum and if you have interest in the museums of the military that's a great place to go and Sea Port Village, walking, dining activities, and if that doesn't interest you, a simple Google search will get you anything you want to do and it's probably available in this area. Of course we have our dining and there is amen new here for every taste bud we have 229 million cases of wine that will accompany any menu selection you make, and will lighten any attitude that you may have. So we want you to be sure that you take some of that with you.

Couple of quick things: We want you to help our economy. We take cash, major credit cards
(Chuckles.)

Epay of any kind! We are a "green" state so if you lighten your load going home by leaving your cash here it will help out with the fuel reserves on the plane going back so leave plenty of it, enjoy our conference and your stay here in San Diego, glad to have you here
(Applause.)

>> LISA HINSON‑HATZ: Thank you, Joe, everybody will probably leave plenty of money here, I'm sure. It's my honor to introduce our Executive Director, our CEO, Steve Wooderson. I want to thank Steve and the rest of the CSAVR staff who are growing, Rita, Theresa, John, Ron, and new to the group is Danielle, so the group is growing, I want to thank you for putting together a beautiful conference and thanks for being my boss. He calls me his boss but I call him my boss!
(Applause.)

>> STEVE WOODERSON: Good morning! So there is a spa here and for those of you who are going to have a sore neck today from looking at the water I'm sure they will take appointments so you can get your neck loosened up. It's a beautiful day and it's wonderful to see a full house! Do we have open seats? If you have a see the next to you would you mind raising your hand? There are folks in the back that would probably like to find a spot to sit.

I think we've got a few more seats in the back. We have a huge group here this week. I think by our count this may be the second largest conference that we have had. Only second to the D.C. conference right after the passage of WIOA. I think you are here because you're expecting to hear some stuff! You are going to be a part of dialogue and networking with one another and we certainly believe that's going to be happening.

I want to take a few moments and give you a few announcements before we get into the meat of our conversation today. First of all, we're glad to be in partnership with San Diego State University for CRCs for those of you that want your credits I believe Theresa is going to be available at the table outback and she will be able to get you squared away so thank you San Diego State for your partnership. We have a large property as you have been navigating this over the last couple of days but there is a map on the backside of your program. If you do need assistance in finding your way from here to other points, we hope to have staff, we will have staff and hotel staff out there to help you get around. The majority of what we're going to be doing is right in this area. There are meeting rooms out this door to the right. Some of us were in those meeting rooms yesterday for the directors' meetings. There are a lot of people here that will be able to help us get around.

315 I think is the last count, so if you haven't met somebody you don't know it's just because you haven't turned around, right?
(Chuckles.)

There are enough people here for you to become engaged in the conversation. We had a great weekend where we had new directors' training and a directors' forum and one of the constant themes that comes up as a result of these activities is how great it is to be able to network and to have conversation with folks that are experiencing the same thing that we are experiencing across the country. So please take advantage of what we have available to us here and get to know one another.

We know that regulations are a hot item, obviously, and we decided that maybe some of you would like or somebody might be interested in getting a complete printed version of the regulations. Well, we took the liberty to print some for staff. We printed one extra. If you have an interest in that see Theresa and we will put your name in the hat and that will be the grand prize win!
(Chuckles.)

For all of the activities over the next three days! So if you can't wait to buy another suitcase to pack those home in, then you have an opportunity here. In all seriousness we do want to provide you with that if you're interested in that. We have a new opportunity that we have not done in the past so I want to take a moment to acknowledge the chance that we have to in an informal way dialogue with individuals from our technical assist be answer centers and partner for disabled persons Inc who is our town acquisition portal. They are going to be in the Palm 1 room and they will be there throughout the next two days. Great opportunity for you to drop‑in, visit with them, get to know them, ask questions, be able to get some awareness of the woke that they may be doing, even if you are not involved in one of their projects, it's okay for you to stop in and get to know them as well.

These are the times that they are available over the next two days. Today until 6, noon until 6 and tomorrow 8‑5. I think almost all of the technical assistance centers maybe with the exception of one will be there and, again, our partners with Disabled Persons, Inc, our town acquisition portal partners.

We have been blessed over the last few months to have the support of our executive committee and officers to begin to expand on some of our capacity as staff. I want to take a moment to introduce you to a couple of folks that we believe have going to bring us great assistance, support, more importantly than them providing support to the staff is the support that they are going to provide to the field.

As Lisa mentioned, as of about four days ago, we brought on two independent contractors, and they are here today, Danielle Guest, who wants in the room at the moment but you will get to know here. She has demonstrated a great interest in the work of the NET, National Employment Team, and the Talent Acquisition Portal, they say the current director of the Delaware BLN and we are looking forward to her work and being able to expand the capacity that Kathy has been about specifically and also in helping trees ya in many of the areas administratively that Kathy has been responsible for as well. She hales from Delaware and attended Arizona State University and when I talked with her the other day she said she is a crazy sports fan, I have no idea where she might have gotten that tendency. She is a history nerd ask a classic rock junky so you will see Danielle around over the next few days and we're thankful to have her on board.

The second person is a gentleman by the name of Ron Vessel, Ron, would you stand in he is our independent contractor for WINTAC, brought Ron on just a few days ago and he will be working closely with John, specifically those states that CSAVR has a responsibility for providing technical assistance to as well. Pleased to have Ron with us. Ron is an Mizzou grad and Ron and I have a bit of history together. I worked for this guy for a number of years. Something that I think you probably need to be aware of is even though Ron and I both hale from the "show me" state, there is a significant difference between the two of us, Ron comes from south of St. Louis, iron country, my family comes from northwest, Missouri and I say Missouri and he says Missouri, one of us probably has more culture than the other but I don't know Ron, we will let them figure out who that is, okay?
(Chuckles.)

Absolutely thrilled to have Ron with us. Ron, thank you very much. If you don't mind, take a moment and let's welcome Ron and Danielle to our team.
(Applause.)

As is typical, we come to our conferences with some new folks in the crowd. When it comes to state directors. Many of these have been involved in several days of conversation already, maybe a couple of them didn't know what they bit off when they decided to come to CSAVR and the amount of work we put them through over the last few days but we want to recognize them and say thank you. At our coffee break this morning we will introduce ourselves to you and welcome you to CSAVR. First is Terra Myers from North Carolina.
(Applause.)

I tried to put Terra in Tennessee the other day, I think, so I'm sorry about that, didn't meaning to push anybody out of a job, by any means but I have a geography issue, obviously. Second is Bill Robinson from Michigan Blind, Bill?
(Applause.)

Terra and Bill have been here all week end and I'm surprised you're still upright so thank you for toughing it out with us. Elijah Jenkins from Delaware Blind.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: She is coming to NCSB.

>> STEVE WOODERSON: Understand, Kristen Mackie from Arizona Combined, another one that's been with us for the weekend
(Applause.)

Sean Casey,

>> GEORGE: Combined are you here, Sean? All right. Emily Wardon, Iowa Blind, Emily?
(Applause.)

Jane Elizabeth Birdshaw, Jane?
(Applause.)

And Brenda ‑‑ oops, Mary Jane Waldron from West Virginia Combined, I don't know that she is here. And Brenda Drummond, Maine Blind, let's give them a big round of applause.
(Applause.)

So as we said, during the coffee break let's take time to introduce ourselves to all of our new directors to Ron and Danielle and looking forward to working with everybody the next few days. So I want to take a different approach to our Washington update this morning because we're going to be spending a lot of time with our colleagues from RSA, we will be look forward to hearing from them. Thought it might be more appropriate to take this time to speak to a few things that maybe in general our membership are unaware of, the kinds of things that staff are involved with that may not be out in the forefront because you are very much aware of the activities that we're about when it comes to our interaction with folks on the Hill and in the administration and in the Beltway. Thought I would take a moment to bring you up to date on a few things that are priorities for us over the course of the next few weeks.

We have been in conversation with a number of folks and when I say "we" I give most credit to Rita. In Washington, D.C., as we try to understand what may be the sentiment or anticipation of the reauthorization of Individuals With Disabilities Education Act and as you are aware WIOA has changed the focus for many of us in our priorities and emphasis and when it comes to IDEA we believe there are opportunities for us to encourage, influence, be part of the conversation. Recently Rita and I had an opportunity to sit down with our colleagues at the National Association of State Directors Education, and that is on the heels of others that ‑‑ conversations that we have had with others getting a feel for that. In addition to WIOA being passed, we had a coalition of folks that we worked with to highlight three or four areas of emphasis to be sure that our voice was being heard.

We are taking that model and moving that in partnership with NSDEA and after the first of the year we will pull together a group to co less around this issue. If you think about the huge piece of legislation that that is, we want to be sure we have a focus on that which is important specific to the public vocational rehabilitation program. There will probably be a dozen work groups in D.C. working on IDEA and we want to have a focus on that which is touching the rehab act, obviously and IDEA.

So there are a few in the crowd that are probably tired of seeing my e‑mails over the last couple of weeks, because we've already begun to think about some things that we can do and I sent out a blast here recently and a lot of that information is starting to come to us as far as preparing for this. It will be after the first of the year, the new administration is seated before we begin to move much forward on that.

Second activity that many of you may not be aware of that we're involved with is a group of like‑minded individuals who have an interest in seeing that the qualifications of the qualified rehabilitation counselor is held in high esteem and that those who come through preservice and graduate from rehabilitation counselling programs are ready to go to work in the public VR program. In addition to that, trying to encourage higher education to consider the curriculum that is needed by the public VR agencies so around that idea has been formed when some of you probably heard me refer to as rehabilitation counselling coalition, RCC and we decided we needed to put the "V" back in the VRCC so now we are the vocational rehabilitation counselling coalition and I am the chair along with Allison Flannigan, good morning, Aly son, Allison and I have been here since Wednesday, I guess, trying to ‑‑ not trying to, that's not the right word, representing our interest. As you can imagine with the number of issues that are related to accreditation of late, particularly the core to K crypt matters, issues related to maintaining the ‑‑ the states maintaining their high level of standards for hiring vocational rehabilitation counselors and a number of other things. It's a labor of love. Allison, is that fair?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

>> STEVE WOODERSON: We believe that there are a number of individuals that have a real interest in seeing that we continue this effort. So I want to thank Allison for sticking with us. We've been at this for a couple of years and believe that maybe, maybe we are starting to hit our stride as a result of our most recent meeting here in San Diego.

I want to mention to you that you're somewhat aware of our engagement with the number of technical assistance centers, John is there a total of seven? Seven. Of those centers, CSAVR is partners with four of those. We are involved in conversations with the others as well but we want to bring that to your awareness because what it also means is it's not just a partnership on CSAVR's part, it also means that we have pulled you into that in one way or the other. Our intent is obviously to first and foremost represent the needs of our membership, but that also means that we find ourselves probably asking a lot of you at the same time.

So really what we want to say to you is thank you! Thank you for being as responsive to us as you are. Our desire is to always influence the outcome in a way that best suits our membership. And for us to be able to do that, it often means that John or Theresa and Kathy in particular are reaching out to you and asking you for the input that we need.

So I know that there may be times you high holy smokes this is another email from John or Steve but it impacts we believe the overall product that you then are able to access in your own states.

In addition to the Technical Assistance Centers, we are partnering with a number of other projects. We have four with OCRS that we are ‑‑ excuse me, one with OCRS that we're involved with and another, believe it or not, six that we're currently involved with with NIDLRR. I think it's three more that we will be unfolding here in the near future as well. So when you look at the number of cooperative agreements that we've engaged with when it comes to the Technical Assistance Centers, with OCRS and NIDLRR, John and Kathy have full‑time work, that's all there is to it. By extension it means that we're doing all we can to represent you in these kinds of activities.

We also are represented on the national Clear House for rehabilitation and training materials, and that is something that we believe is important as far as it being a warehouse for the information that you want to access. This was mentioned to many of the directors yesterday but we do have a couple of areas that particularly play into the national employment team and talent acquisition portal as well. When we look at current legislation we realize that we have two customers, right? So we have our consumers and business. We feel like it's time for us to step up and do even more, although we have been leading the way, as it pertains to engaging and communicating with the business community.

One opportunity that we just recently entered into is with the VR development group. Kathy has led this charge, the VR development group has developed a series of online trainings that will soon be launched. Is that fair to say?

>> KATHY: They're in development.

>> STEVE WOODERSON: They're in development but they will be offered to you as CSAVR members at a discount. Kathy has been involved in the curriculum and we believe that it will add value to your work with business.

We have entered into an agreement with a media firm that ‑‑ this will be our first time that we've done anything like this and we're pretty darn excited! We appreciate the support of the officers in particular here because as we were beginning to think about Vision 2020 that you will be hearing more about, Lisa, Mark, Robert in particular, kind of helped us to navigate how we wanted to engage in a partnership with a media outlet. And this organization, Diversity Com, has a media publication online. It will be a while before you see much of this but essentially we will share articles, we will be able to share our priorities and national initiatives through the variety of different outlet us that they have. We're pretty darn excited about that. That's our first and you will be seeing as a result of a relationship, you will be seeing information about them come out on a regular basis as well.

Then absolutely not last or least, because there is so much other stuff going on but we want to highlight that we have recently made a pretty significant step with our partnership with disabled persons, Inc and the Talent Acquisition Portal. For some time and Kathy will verify this, we really began to think about how do we position ourselves as we begin to expand on business relations work in a way that provides us with an opportunity to attract customers, to be able to attract different resources to support the work that we're about. Work in the business relations field. As the Talent Acquisitions Portal was built and became more active and we were able to draw resources as a result of that, we found ourselves working with our partners at Disabled Persons, Inc and believe that it was wise to consider moving into a limited liability corporation partnership with that organization. It's another one of those labors of love as far as the legal processes that we have been through for now some time. Maybe better than a year, probably.

We're really pleased that we now as of just recently, have been able to launching our limited liability corporation partnership with Disabled Persons, Inc and now we have the Talent Acquisition Network and that is providing us already with an opportunity to here in California is where it's actually based to then be able to look at some other opportunities to help support our activities and most importantly, two aspects, VR is demonstrating leadership in this entire arena and then secondly, to enter into new and different partnerships that we would not have been able to do as a membership organization. So Disabled Persons, Inc will be with us in the resource room for those directors that were here yesterday they presented information to us as well so we are very thrilled about that.

That wraps up by saying thank you. Thank you for you, the membership for the support that you provided to us, it will last many months with these new initiatives that we're about, a huge thank you to our leadership team, our press, press‑elect, immediate past‑press, Russ and the entire executive committee we're thankful for all you've done. For me personally to say thank you to the staff. Rita, Kathy, John, Theresa, because we obviously had ‑‑ this is our first meeting since the regulations were released. You can imagine the work that staff has been about, everything from organizing conversation to diving deep into the regulations themselves. So thank you to the staff and thank you Ron for joining us, Danielle for joining us and we're looking forward to a great conference.

This is a big week. It's a pretty big week, right? In many ways. As I mentioned, it's the first meeting since the release of regulations, so that in and of itself is big enough for any one week, right? For any few days for us to be together and to really get into some meet and we expect and we know that RSA's intent is to deliver answers to questions that we've long been seeking and believe that this is going to be a great opportunity for us.

It really didn't just happen, though, over night. I want to express my appreciation to the Commissioner and her staff because we have been working on this conference for not just weeks, Commissioner, months, right? So there has been a great deal of preplanning that has gone on as far as gathering information from our membership as far as the priority areas that we hope to address over the next three days and toe really just bring folks to the table to get the answers that we're really interested in getting.

It is clear to us RSA's commitment to support that. There are 18 members of RSA here today. Can we just take a moment and say thank you to them for that?
(Applause.)

Windows 10 that there were a couple of others that they had hoped to bring with them but due to other circumstances were not able to be here. We have the opportunity to have the conversations that we must have in order tore us to move forward in delivering on the promises of WIOA so Commissioner, thank you to you and your staff for making the trip. I know it's tough to leave Washington, D.C. and come to San Diego, it's a horrible thing, right?
(Chuckles.)

So thank you for being here. We have already had a weekend and several days where many of us were networking but this is a time for us to really expand on getting to know one another and learning from one another.

There is one thing I haven't spoken to and that's, we're going to be together tomorrow, right? What's happening tomorrow? First of all, thank you for voting early because I know everybody here has already voted unless you live in San Diego and you get up at 5:00 and go! So thank you for already voting. You know, I had floated an idea that we have a ‑‑ I'm trying not to snicker as I say this. I floated the idea of us having a "watch party" tomorrow night! Floated the idea
(Laughter.)

Just floated the idea! And I think part of it is a way that I communicated because we didn't want anybody booing, any nasty stuff going on so I suggested it be an all tears, no boo's party and someone thought I meant B‑O‑O‑Z‑E, booze, and I said no, boos! So we decided not to have the party, and it may be the best decision we ever made! There is big stuff happening over the next 24 hours and we're not here to make light of that, but to celebrate that, the freedom that we have to express ourselves, to vote and make our voice known in the way that we feel like it needs to be made known.

We're going to be here together when we hear the announcement tomorrow night of our next President is going to be. I'm excited that I'm with my colleagues to have that happen, I really am! If I'm not happy I know you're going to cradle me and comfort me.
(Laughter.)

If I am happy you're going to party with me! But here is the bottom line, it doesn't matter in many ways for us, because you know what? Wednesday morning we're going to get up and do our job. We're going to go right on doing what we're doing and we're going to do it to the best of our ability. We're going to embrace the spirit of WIOA, we're going to seek out opportunity, innovation and we're going to continue to do the great things that we are about.
(Applause.)

Thank you. So to that end over the next couple of days, you will be hearing conversation about this idea of Vision 2020. We are going to bring that home on Wednesday morning. So the idea is that we are the face of the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program and we are the ones that are responsible for leading the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program into the future. We are looking at the 100th anniversary in 2020 and there is nobody better around than those in this room to lead us to those days. Please, be looking forward to the opportunities we have to do really good things. Thank you for being here. We are a little bit early but we're going to make the transition, is that okay?

So if our next panel led by the Commissioner would like to make their way up here we will take about two or three minutes of transition and we will get started in a moment. Thank you.
(Applause.)