A VISION OF THE FUTURE

When the board of directors of the American Gas Association meets, they exclusively discuss the future and how we as an industry can improve the lives of our customers and our nation. The men and women who lead America’s natural gas utilities and our organization do not dwell on the past or remain in the present. Their gaze is fixed on the horizon as they plan the hard work that we all must do to help ensure that the benefits of natural gas continue to be available to our growing customer base, and that our nation continues to take advantage of natural gas’ abundance, affordability and efficiency. It is inspiring and compelling.

As 2016 comes to a close, I am grateful to have the opportunity to reflect on the visionary we have had at the helm of our board for this year, as well as the bold leader who will inherit this mantle.

Ralph LaRossa, president and COO of Public Service Electric & Gas Co. in New Jersey, has made an indelible mark on the natural gas utility sector, and his influence will be felt for generations. As AGA chair, Ralph has championed workforce development and inspired us to take a hard look at what we need to do today to have employees who are ready to deliver energy to the customers of tomorrow. His leadership has driven the inception or continuation of several key programs, including Veterans in Energy, the Next Level Leadership Women’s Program and a number of other initiatives to help develop a large and dynamic utility workforce that reflects the communities it serves. Ralph’s passion for bringing a new generation of employees into our member companies has spurred action throughout our industry that will benefit thousands of young people for a very long time.

Our cover story this month features our chair for 2017, Pierce Norton. Pierce is the president and CEO of ONE Gas Inc., which provides distribution services to more than two million customers in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. Pierce knows the gas industry very well, having worked upstream and downstream and across the country. While we share a love of Oklahoma, Pierce has not forgotten his roots in Alabama, his alma mater at the University of Alabama and his beloved Crimson Tide. While Pierce developed a taste for national championships in college, he also discovered his ability to influence and lead.

As you will read in our story, Pierce not only has a strong vision for our industry, but he also has spent the past year leading a strategic planning initiative for AGA. His deep background in the industry informs his insightful vision for our future and a belief in the role of natural gas as our nation moves toward a low-carbon energy portfolio. Pierce has an abiding faith in the collaboration that is at the heart of AGA’s mission and our ability to anticipate and serve the needs of an emerging and evolving customer base.

This holiday season, natural gas utilities will fill America’s homes with warmth and comfort, just as we have for generations. Thanks to the vision of our board of directors, and leaders like Ralph LaRossa and Pierce Norton, our companies will chart a path toward a future in which our customers will enjoy the benefits of natural gas for many years to come.

I look forward to 2017 and our work together.