What are the top legislative and regulatory issues facing professional engineers in 2020?

Promoting Professional Licensure
NSPE advocates for the protection of the engineering license against all threats, including legislation with dangerous “consumer choice” provisions, which would allow anyone to practice any occupation, unlicensed, as long as they disclose their status to the consumer. While organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Institute for Justice continue their attack on professional licensing, NSPE is here to stop them, and will continue to promote rigorous licensing laws that protect public health, safety, and welfare, such as advocating for the elimination of licensing exemptions.

Creating Sustainable Infrastructure
Congressional leaders continue to state that infrastructure is high on their priority list, and the need to address the nation’s crumbling infrastructure should be an issue on which there is bipartisan agreement. As policy conversations persist on Capitol Hill, we need our legislators to fund sustainable and resilient infrastructure and prioritize adaptability and sustainability with regard to climate change and new transportation technologies.

Improving License Mobility for Military, Veterans
The ease with which a PE can get licensed in multiple jurisdictions remains an important concern, particularly for veterans and military families. The Army, Navy and the Air Force conducted a joint study into licensing processes and reciprocity among states, which resulted in proposed changes to improve license mobility. The past year saw multiple states approach license mobility with military spouses in mind. Arizona (HB 2569) and Pennsylvania (HB 1172) succeeded in expanding license mobility for all, including for veterans and military families. NSPE will continue to fight for increased mobility while protecting rigorous licensing standards in the coming year.

Improving Access to Licensure
The increasing efforts to ease licensing restrictions for people who have criminal histories was a focus for NSPE in 2019, and will be a focus in 2020 as legislative activity continues. In accordance with Position Statement 09-200, NSPE does not support automatic disqualification of engineering license applicants who have criminal histories, but believes that licensing boards must retain their autonomy and ability to make case-by-case determinations for applicants with criminal histories.

A handful of bills have also been designed to address costs associated with licensure. The most popular, known as a 529 bill, would allow people who have 529 education accounts to use that money to pay for exams, exam prep, and application fees when obtaining a license.