NTSB urges states to close licensure exemptions
During the National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation of the Merrimack Valley gas pipeline explosions, NSPE worked closely with NTSB staff. The NTSB heard NSPE’s opposition to engineering license exemptions, and recognized the importance of having a professional engineer involved in key roles relevant to public safety within the pipeline industry. The NTSB final report urges states to end PE exemptions for gas pipeline projects. The NTSB sent formal letters to the governors of the 31 states it identified as having license exemptions for gas pipeline operators, urging them to end those exemptions. NSPE has contacted the state societies in each of those states to monitor developments.

Ohio scores win on requiring PE involvement in amusement park rides
A bill known as “Tyler’s Law,” would place a professional engineer on the Ohio Advisory Council on Amusement Ride Safety. The Ohio Senate passed House Bill 189 in a floor vote (30-0) in October. The bill is named for Tyler Jarrell, an 18-year-old Marine recruit who was killed when a ride malfunctioned due to excessive corrosion in a steel support beam. NSPE encourages all states to take up similar legislation to prevent the risk of fatal accidents on water slide and amusement park rides.

NSPE teams up with Commerce committee on AV regulation
NSPE government relations staff forged relationships with key staffers on the Senate Commerce Committee as they work on a new version of autonomous vehicle legislation. The Senate Commerce Committee staff reached out to NSPE for feedback on drafted language for the AV START Act, which is being pursued in a bicameral and bipartisan manner in the 116th Congress. NSPE was first contacted at the start of the process in August 2019 and will continue to provide feedback and ensure the PE voice is heard in the drafting of this legislation.

Consumer Choice bills threatening public safety defeated in Missouri
In the last legislative session, NSPE saw a surge in the threat commonly known as “consumer choice” or “buyer beware” legislation. In 2019, at least three states introduced this type of legislation, and NSPE successfully killed these bills by communicating with state societies and offering advocacy support. A prime example of a “buyer beware” threat came in the form of Missouri S.B. 500, a bill that would have allowed any person to practice any occupation without a license, as long as the provider disclosed that he/she is unlicensed. (Note: notice on the provider’s website would count as ‘disclosure,’ which means someone who never saw the website wouldn’t know they just hired an unlicensed person.) If passed, that allowance would have presented a great risk to the public’s health, safety, and welfare. NSPE expects to see this threat again in the coming legislative session and will continue to fight these threats that can prove detrimental to the public.