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Taking Pride in our Mission

Building a better world across boundaries and oceans

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Over the past years, many of us have struggled with the “why” behind IRWA’s emphasis on international growth. As I have observed and participated in our organization’s spread of its principles around the globe, I’ve developed a deeper understanding of the reasons this expansion is so crucial to our future.

Since our Association’s formation in 1934, we have taken pride in our mission of banding together as right of way professionals to help one another be the best that we can be. Frank Balfour had an initial vision for the Southern California Right of Way Agent’s Association to empower and share knowledge among the vibrant Southern California transportation right of way community. That was only the first step of many. Professionals up and down the West Coast soon recognized the benefits of sharing best practices and formed additional chapters of the newly renamed American Right of Way Association.

As right of way specialists nationwide began to recognize the opportunities available through partnering with others in the field, Chapters started to develop and flourish all across the United States. Professionals began to see the advantages they could provide to one another, and the group grew beyond a single focus of street and highway right of way to include all linear corridors, electric transmission lines, oil and gas pipelines and the even broader area of public agency infrastructure in all of its shapes and sizes. In doing so, we expanded

our knowledge and expertise into the various disciplines that constitute the infrastructure real estate field today.

As part of this natural growth in both geography and expertise, we became the International Right of Way Association. Looking northward to neighbors in Canada, we reached out as an Association, not only to offer our best practices, but also to explore what we could learn from another nation’s infrastructure experiences. With so much

have reached a point where we are ready to expand the experiences, knowledge and circle of friends and partners in our close-knit Association. Today, we can look forward to forming even more global alliances to share information and best practices. Ultimately, this will strengthen the real estate infrastructure profession worldwide.

In conjunction with IRWA’s 2016 Annual International Education Conference in Nashville, a new global

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to gain from these shared experiences, more IRWA Chapters formed and grew both north and south of the common border. This membership expansion not only thrived, it excelled in offering relationships that went far beyond shared technical expertise. The success of this expansion demonstrated to members that we had become a community no longer limited by geopolitical boundaries. And as we learned from one another, we quickly became friends across political borders.

A legacy of warm international relations between the two countries developed from this give and take. Based on this success, and the enthusiastic reception of efforts to share the IRWA with a global audience, we

initiative will be introduced. The Inaugural Congress for Global Infrastructure Real Estate will be held the day prior to conference, featuring representatives and presentations from around the world. This is the perfect opportunity for all of us to start, or in some cases continue, the process of building global relationships that will become the customary way to conduct business in the worldwide right of way community.

While all of us will continually work to advance our profession, I hope you will join with me in reaching across borders to share our knowledge—individually and collectively—across boundaries and oceans, to build a better world, together. 🌍