

## ACS state chapter lobby day program

by *Charlotte Grill*

Last year, the American College of Surgeons (ACS) started a new program to increase the number of chapters that host lobby day programs at their state capitals. The Board of Regents approved a proposal endorsed by the Board of Governors and more than 27 chapters to provide \$50,000 over two years in grants for state chapters to organize lobby days during the 2011 and 2012 legislative sessions. Chapters were eligible to receive up to \$5,000, but would be required to match that grant with one dollar for every two dollars received.

The level of interest from state chapters regarding the grant program was high, and demonstrated a pent-up demand to increase their state level advocacy efforts. For the 2011 legislative session, 10 state chapters were awarded grants, including Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, Northern California, Ohio, and Virginia. At the time this article went to press, seven chapters had held their lobby day events.

The following is a summary of various state lobby days programs, including different approaches for hosting lobby day events, and highlights of some of the important legislation and bills that were discussed with state legislators.

### ***Florida Chapter Lobby Day (February 8)***

At the Florida Chapter's inaugural lobby day, a large group of surgeons assembled for a legislative briefing by their chapter lobbyist, Chris Nuland, and a presentation given by ACS Division of Advocacy and Health Policy State Affairs staff before breaking for their meetings at the Capitol.

While meeting with their representatives, the attending surgeons discussed various pieces of legislation, such as an insurance mandate for colorectal screening and sovereign immunity for emergency services.

### ***Virginia Chapter Lobby Day (February 9)***

A small group of surgeons attended the Virginia Chapter's White Coats On Call rally at the state capitol. This event was held on the same day as lob-

bying efforts from the Medical Society of Virginia and was a joint effort with the Virginia Chapter of the ACS to arrange physicians' meetings with state legislators. Attendees had very successful visits with several members of the legislature, during which they discussed a comprehensive medical liability reform package that was signed into law in April 2010.

### ***Georgia Chapter Lobby Day (March 23)***

A small group of surgeons met at the end of the legislative session to focus on meeting with the legislative leadership of relevant committees in both legislative chambers. Following a short issue and advocacy briefing by ACS State Affairs staff and the chapter's Executive Director/lobbyist, the surgeons went to the Capitol building and learned about "working the line," which occurs when pages are asked to pull legislators from the floor to come out to a rope line to chat for a minute or two with their constituents.

The surgeons also had private meetings with a couple of committee chairs to discuss important legislation, such as liability reform, that is pending in their committees.

### ***Connecticut Chapter Lobby Day (April 7)***

The Connecticut Chapter held their lobby day along with the Connecticut State Medical Society Doctor Day. Attendees of the lobby day were encouraged to discuss concerns about medical liability reform with their legislators, due to the fact that Connecticut still has some of the highest insurance liability premiums in the country. Surgeons representing the College were encouraged to discuss the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner bill that was introduced this session and would allow physicians and other health care professionals who have out-of-state licenses to volunteer and provide aid for the duration of an emergency.

The lobby day group then reassembled for lunch, during which a newly elected state representative who is a physician and member of the Connecticut State Medical Society gave a presentation.

---

### ***Indiana Chapter Lobby Day (April 28)***

The Indiana Chapter had a great turnout for a first-time visit to the state Capitol building. Attendees gathered in the morning to listen to a number of presentations on the impact of the Affordable Care Act at the state level, as well as a keynote address on health care reform from Dennis Ryerson, editor and vice-president of the *Indianapolis Star*. In the afternoon, surgeons went to observe the legislature on the second-to-last day of session. Surgeons were encouraged to pull their representatives from the floor to discuss important legislation such as trauma funding and distracted driving.

### ***New York Chapter Lobby Day (May 10)***

The New York State Chapter held a lobby day in conjunction with The New York Coalition of Specialty Physicians. A total of eight physician and specialty groups worked together and had members attend from the following: American College of Surgeons New York State, New York State Ophthalmological Society, New York State Society of Orthopedic Surgeons, New York State Society of Otolaryngology, New York State Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, New York State Society of Plastic Surgeons, Medical Society of the State of New York, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

These physicians addressed several scope-of-practice bills with their state legislators. There was also a strong emphasis placed on a bill that would allow dentists to perform surgery on the oral and maxillofacial area, and to perform cosmetic surgery on the eye, face, head, and neck. While the bill was considered to be very viable and passed through the Senate, it did not pass through the Assembly and therefore did not get through the New York General Assembly this session.

There was also a bill pending to allow podiatrists to treat not only the foot, but the ankle and all soft tissue areas of the leg below the knee. Other scope-of-practice bills that were discussed with legislators centered on issues related to optometrists and nurse practitioners. However, those bills did not have enough momentum and support to get passed by the General Assembly this session. It was critical timing for the New York physicians to meet with legislators and discuss all of the potential effects and consequences of these scope-of-practice expansion bills, as these bills are re-introduced every session.

The potential negative consequences of expanding scope of practice should be at the forefront of legislators' minds when these bills are introduced.

Looking ahead, with three more state chapters scheduled to host their lobby day programs, future updates will provide a recap on those programs. These highly successful lobby day programs have increased the profile and advocacy efforts of surgeons with their state legislators. State chapters that are interested in receiving a grant for the 2012 legislative session should note that applications were sent out to chapters in June with a deadline of September 16, 2011. □

---

***Ms. Grill*** is State Affairs  
Associate, Division of  
Advocacy and Health Policy,  
Chicago IL.

