



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS (ACS)



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS  
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (ACSPA)

# Advocacy in Action

*Advocacy in Action* is a new electronic newsletter from the American College of Surgeons Professional Association (ACSPA) and the American College of Surgeons (ACS). This publication is designed to provide readers with timely updates on the robust political, educational, and policy-making activities the ACSPA and the College are carrying out on behalf the surgical profession and surgical patients. **Advocacy in Action** is published monthly or more frequently when urgent or late-breaking information warrants your immediate attention to help our members stay abreast of the socioeconomic issues that affect their ability to provide quality care to their patients. For more information about items in this publication, contact [ahp@facs.org](mailto:ahp@facs.org)

## ACSPA

● So far this year, ACSPA SurgeonsPAC has raised \$245,000 from 868 Fellows and staff; this amount, combined with donations collected in 2007, adds up to a total of \$884,000 in contributions for the 2008 election cycle.

● ACSPA SurgeonsPAC staff has attended 58 Washington, DC, fundraisers for members of Congress this year.

● The PAC hosted fundraising events for the following members of Congress:

- Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee
- Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT), Member of the Financial Services and Homeland Security Committees, Ranking Member Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs

● The PAC is scheduled to host events for the following members of Congress:

- Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
- Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND), Member of the Senate Finance Committee
- Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL), Chairman, Tuesday Group, composed of centrist Republicans

● Staff has traveled to fundraisers for the following members:

- Rep. Dave Camp (D-MI), Ranking Member of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, for a fundraiser in Florida
- Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), lead sponsor of Medicare payment reform legislation containing College-supported provisions establishing separate conversion factors for six categories of physician services, for an event in Nevada

● Staff plans to travel to events for the following members:

- Sen. John Ensign (R-NV), Chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee and Member of the Senate Finance Committee, for an event in his home state

## Medicare payment

● On March 25, ACS Executive Director Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS, wrote to Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) to offer the College's support for her introduction of the Save Medicare Act of 2008, S. 2785. This bill would stop the 10.6 percent cut in Medicare physician payments scheduled to take effect July 1 and would maintain current reimbursement levels through the end of 2008. Importantly, the legislation also would replace the scheduled 5.4 percent payment cut in 2009 with a 1.8 percent increase.

● On April 11, ACS advocacy staff participated in a meeting hosted by Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, to discuss legislation to stop the 10.6

percent cut in Medicare payments scheduled to take effect July 1 and to increase Medicare physician payments in 2009.

● So far this month ACS advocacy staff and colleagues from the surgical specialty societies have met with health policy advisors to eight other members of the Finance Committee to further discuss this issue. Meeting participants also commented on the surgical community's opposition to plans that could reduce surgical reimbursements to compensate for other policy decisions. Senators whose aides were involved in these meetings include:

- Ron Wyden (D-OR)
- Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
- Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
- Jon Kyl (R-AZ)
- Jim Bunning (R-KY)
- Mike Crapo (R-ID)
- Pat Roberts (R-KS)
- John Sununu (R-NH)

● On April 15, ACS advocacy staff met with the health policy advisor to Rep. Jim McCrery (R-LA), Ranking Republican Member of the House Ways and Means Committee, to discuss Medicare reimbursement policy.

### Performance measures

● The ACS expressed support for the Consumer Purchaser Disclosure Project's efforts to develop a patient charter for physician performance measurement, which promotes fairness and transparency in health care quality measurement and reporting programs. It also calls for physician organization involvement in developing measures and reporting systems and for physicians to have adequate notice and opportunity to correct any inaccuracies in their performance data.

### State affairs

● On April 5, S.B. 433 passed in the Georgia House 138-17 and in the Senate 44-7, overturning the state's longstanding policy of defining general surgery as a multispecialty for purposes of an exemption from certificate-of-need (CON) requirements for ambulatory surgery facilities. The College urged Georgia surgeons on March 19 to call House leadership, members of the House Special Committee on CON, and their respective state legislators to support S.B. 433, which reclassifies general surgery as a single specialty. Subsequent e-mails also asked surgeons to write their state legislators through the Surgery State Legislative Action Center (SSLAC). In addition, the College wrote to Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue to encourage him to sign the bill. Georgia surgeons were able to contact him as well through the SSLAC, and on April 9 he approved the legislation.

● The College sent letters to members of the California Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee in opposition to S.B. 1406, which allows optometrists to perform surgical procedures on the eye with scalpels or lasers without medical oversight.

● The Florida Committee on Trauma worked with ACS state affairs staff and the SSLAC to generate letters to state committee members in opposition to a red light camera law in the state. More than 50 surgeons responded to requests to contact the committee members through the SSLAC.

● The College is part of a coalition of national surgical and medical organizations that is planning a "Physicians Advocating for Patients" exhibit for presentation at the National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative Summit in July. Thousands of state legislators, senior state legislative staff, and other state government policymakers attend this meeting.

● Surgeons in Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, and Oklahoma were encouraged to contact their state legislators through the SSLAC to show their support of the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act. This model legislation enables health care professionals to provide emergency care across state lines in times of crisis.

### Practice management

● The ACS will sponsor the following practice management Webinars in the coming weeks:

- Effective Governance and Management of Your Practice, April 23
- Benchmarking Practice Productivity and Profitability, May 7
- Developing a Practical Compliance Plan, May 23

For more information or to register, go to <http://www.facs.org/ahp/workshops/teleconferences.html>.

### What you can do

● The ACS is recruiting surgeons to participate in the development of a cross-specialty version of the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey for surgical patients, which the organization is sponsoring. CAHPS has set the national standard as for evaluating patients' health care experiences, is used for public reporting of quality and performance improvement efforts, and has been endorsed by the American Board of Medical Specialties for maintenance of certification purposes.

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