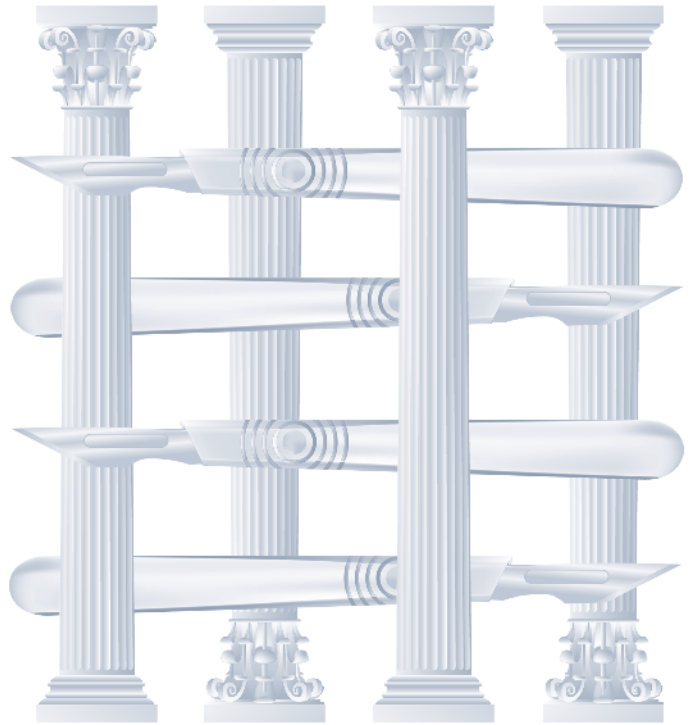


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# IMPROVE YOUR ADVOCACY SKILLS

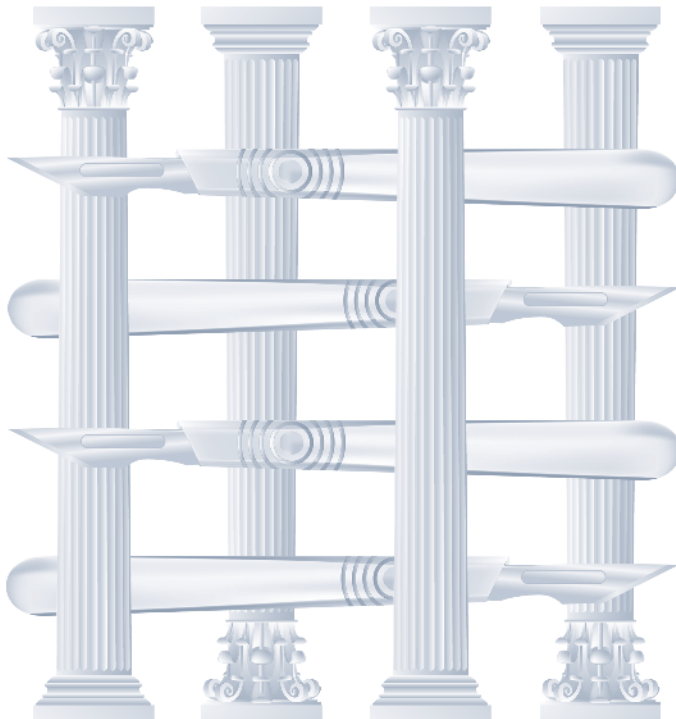
by attending the  
2010 JSAC in July

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by **SARA MORSE**,  
*Manager of Political Affairs, Division of Advocacy and Health Policy*

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In recent years, the American College of Surgeons has made a top priority of bringing together the entire surgical community in a robust and active coalition, representing more than 250,000 surgeons and their patients. (For more information on building a coalition, see the “Advocacy advisor” column on page 25.) This effort has added to surgeons’ political influence through strength in numbers and the combined credibility of its membership. Surgical society staff regularly meet to discuss a wide scope of issues, and are often working in stride on numerous projects and endeavors. One of the most tangible and successful examples of this collaborative effort is the Joint Surgical Advocacy Conference (JSAC), which has been growing in size and scope since its inception two years ago. The 2010 conference will be held July 25–27 in Washington, DC.

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### ***The surgeon advocate***

Every day in Washington, DC, lawmakers are working on legislation that directly affects surgery—both the surgeon and the surgical patient. Now, more than ever, elected officials need to hear from surgeons. The range of issues the ACS and our surgical society colleagues weigh in on is dizzying. Each group, including the ACS, has a professional lobbying presence, which ensures that all surgical specialties are adequately and accurately represented. But more can, and must, be done. The most effective means of telling surgery's story is through you, the surgeon advocate.

### ***JSAC***

JSAC is the only legislative conference that provides an opportunity for surgery as a whole to band together en masse, and work to effect real change on Capitol Hill. JSAC has the potential

to become the largest and most potent advocacy event in Washington, DC. However, an advocacy coalition is only as strong as the activism of its membership, and JSAC must continue to rapidly grow in size and sophistication. Simply put, surgery's political influence depends on you.

All Fellows of the College, along with all the members of the 18 other JSAC-participating organizations, are encouraged to join hundreds of their colleagues in this three-day conference, designed to promote and educate constituent surgeon advocates. The first day is an intensive introduction to the legislative process—how Congress really works. Participants will hear from surgical society staff, key members of Congress, and congressional staff on the status of legislation important to surgery, and they will learn what major changes have been, and will be, facing the U.S. health care delivery system. Perhaps most importantly, participants will be inculcated in the skills and tools necessary to effect change, both during their time in Washington, DC, and throughout the year at home. In response to attendee feedback, this year's conference will feature several breakout sessions, so that seasoned surgeon advocates may take their advocacy skills to the next level, while first-time attendees will be presented with the basic tools and information needed to get them started on the right track.

On the final day of the conference, surgeons will blanket Capitol Hill, visiting hundreds of members of Congress and their staffs to share their personal anecdotes and experiences with these policymakers. This activity provides a face for the issues that legislators and their health policy advisors hear about, year-round, from your Washington advocacy staffs. Last year, surgeons visited a total of 272 legislators' Capitol Hill offices.

In years past, the primary focus of the Capitol Hill visits was Medicare payment reform. In previous years, topics have included enhancing quality improvement initiatives, stabilizing the surgical workforce, preserving quality resident training, alleviating the medical liability crisis, improving trauma and emergency care, and investing in health care research.

As of press time, with efforts to achieve health care reform legislation well under way but not yet complete, it was unclear what specific issues will

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## 2009 JSAC participating societies



American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Surgeons  
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
The American Society of Breast Surgeons  
American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Urological Association  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Society of Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons  
Society of Gynecological Oncologists  
Society for Vascular Surgery  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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## Save the date

### 2010

July 25–27, 2010  
Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill  
400 New Jersey Avenue, NW,  
Washington, DC

### 2011

March 27–29, 2011  
JW Marriott  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC

### 2012

March 25–27, 2012  
JW Marriott  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC

Visit <http://www.facs.org/grassroots/index.html> for more information and to register for the 2010 Joint Surgical Advocacy Conference

be facing surgeons in July. Whether or not Congress passes reform, and however comprehensive the final package signed into law by President Obama will be, there will certainly be no shortage of details that will require the swift and direct attention of surgical advocacy. No matter the final outcome, Congress will need direction for determining what must be accomplished to keep the American health care system running.

### **Other important activities**

It is also important to remember that JSAC is not your only opportunity to participate in surgical advocacy. There are many things you can do throughout the year to help further surgery's presence at the federal level, including the following:

*Join the ACS Grassroots Network.* Visit <http://www.capitolconnect.com/acspa/> and follow the link to join the ACS Grassroots Network. As a Grassroots Network member, you will receive regular legislative updates, calls to action, and other pertinent advocacy information. Where the

interest and circumstances exist, members of the Grassroots Network will be empowered to meet with members of Congress back in their home states, deliver American College of Surgeons Professional Association-Surgeons Political Action Committee (ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC) checks, and represent the College at various legislative and political functions. Grassroots Network members are encouraged to cultivate personal relationships with both senators and representatives as a further means to advance the legislative goals of the College.

*Visit the ACS Federal Action Center.* You can learn about, and take action on, issues pertinent to surgery, read about key legislation that the ACS is working on, find your legislators, and more by visiting this Web site: <http://www.capitolconnect.com/acspa/>.

*Get to know your congressmen and senators by taking the following actions:*

- Communicating with their offices on a regular basis, not just when you “need something”
- Setting up in-district delivery of ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC checks (a great way for you to get to know your member of Congress or to help foster your existing relationship)
- Scheduling a time for your member of Congress and/or his or her staff to tour your office and learn more about issues facing surgery, and how Congress directly affects your practice and your patients
- Hosting an in-district fundraiser for fellow surgeons and the greater physician community benefiting your member of Congress

Individual relationships with members of Congress and their staff are critical to the success of surgery's advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.

*Get involved with your political action committee.* For more information on ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC, visit <http://www.facs.org/acspa/index.html>. 