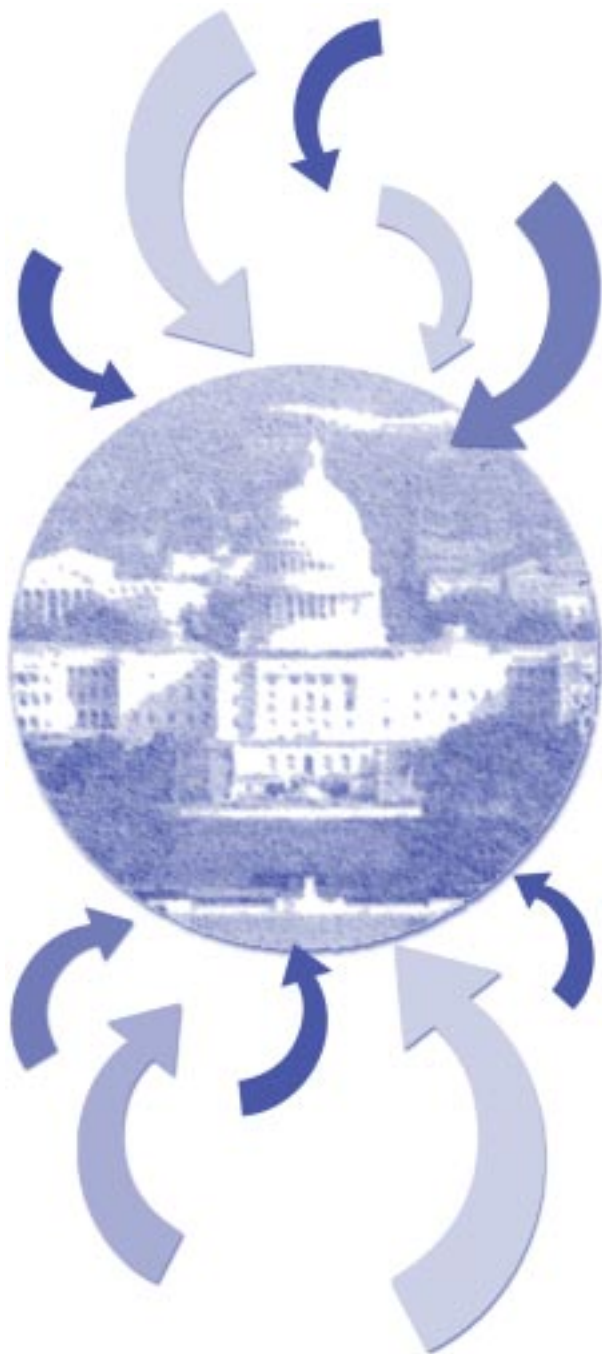


# Health care organizations wield influence in Washington

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Washington, DC, is home to thousands of interest groups that work the halls of the House and Senate office buildings educating members of Congress and their staff on legislation that would benefit the organizations' members, looking for support for a particular bill, or asking for funding.

The sheer volume of interest groups and their requests, constrained resources (compounded by the constant quest for budget neutrality), and competing political agendas result in an ongoing battle for time, attention, and funding from legislators. These demands apply to new as well as established programs.

To achieve its legislative and regulatory goals, it is essential that the College collaborate with other medical organizations on key agenda items whenever possible or at least understand their inability to support surgery's views. The most effective organizations in the political arena are those that have the ability to mobilize knowledgeable members to serve as advocates who can share examples of policy in action or front-line experience. This article discusses a few of the organizations that touch the surgical profession and may be in a position to provide opportunities for collaboration.

## *Physicians' organizations*

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Several physicians' organizations are potential allies of the College. The functions and goals of these organizations are described in this portion of the article.

### ***American Medical Association (AMA)***

The AMA was established in 1847 with the goal of unifying physicians to improve health care in the U.S. Its headquarters is in Chicago, IL, and for the last 59 years, the organization has maintained an active office in Washington, DC. The AMA includes more than 290,000 members spanning the range of specialties and has used its status as one of the largest health care organizations to emphasize its positions to members of Congress and the Administration. The organization's stated mission is to promote the

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*by Erin LaFlair, Legislative Assistant, Division of Advocacy and Health Policy*

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science and the art of medicine and the betterment of public health.

The AMA actively supports Patients' Bill of Rights legislation, Medicare reform, regulatory relief for physicians, correction of the flaws in the system that is used to calculate the Medicare physician payment update, funding for graduate medical education (GME), and fair confidentiality laws for patients and physicians. The AMA's advocacy agenda is directed largely by the House of Delegates (HOD), its policymaking body. The HOD meets twice each year and is composed of 549 delegates from state medical associations, national specialty societies (the College currently has five delegates), and other interest groups. The College has worked with the AMA on issues such as regulatory relief, tort reform, and the 2002 Medicare fee schedule update. To contact the AMA Washington Office, call 202/789-7400 or visit the organization's Web site at [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org).

#### ***American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM)***

The ACP-ASIM has 115,000 physician members in medical specialties that include general internal medicine, cardiology, gastroenterology, hematology, oncology, and immunology. The ACP, founded in 1915, was originally focused on the advancement of clinical knowledge. The ASIM, founded in 1956, focused primarily on socioeconomic issues. In 1998, the two groups determined they were pursuing similar paths in the advancement of internal medicine and merged into a single organization.

Headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, with an office in DC, the ACP-ASIM uses its large primary care constituency to effectively advocate for internists on Capitol Hill. The ACP-ASIM's current legislative priorities include reducing the negative physician payment update for 2002, regulatory reform, tax credits for health insurance, the Patients' Bill of Rights, prescription drug coverage, and the deduction of student loan interest. To contact the ACP-ASIM Washington office, phone 202/261-4500 or visit their Web site at [www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org).

#### ***The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)***

The AAFP was founded in 1947 and is considered one of the larger representatives of general

medicine. Its membership consists of more than 93,000 physicians with the goal of promoting high quality standards, cost-effective health care, and an optimal supply of family physicians. Its legislative agenda is similar to that of the ACP-ASIM—regulatory relief, corrections to the Medicare fee schedule, patient safety, managed care reform, and a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. The AAFP is headquartered in Leawood, KS, with an office in Washington. To contact the Washington office, phone 202/232-9033 or visit [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org).

#### ***American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)***

The ASA, an educational and scientific association of physicians, was founded in 1905 and considers itself the foremost advocate of patients who are in need of anesthesia or pain relief. The ASA has its main office in Park Ridge, IL, and represents more than 37,000 members. The ASA has long been an advocate of quality care and has been recognized by the Institute of Medicine and other policymakers as a pioneer in developing effective patient safety programs. The organization also has supported increased Medicare payments and Food and Drug Administration regulation of medical products and anesthesiology drugs. The College and the ASA have found common ground in patient safety issues. The ASA Washington office can be reached at 202/289-2222 or online at [www.asahq.org](http://www.asahq.org).

#### ***American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)***

The AAP was established in 1930 and has dedicated its membership of 55,000 pediatricians to advancing the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. The AAP is headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL, and has played an active role in the policy arena through its DC office for more than 25 years. Because its patient population has unique issues that are frequently overlooked by larger umbrella organizations, the AAP's emphasis is often different than that of other physician groups in Washington. Its current legislative agenda includes modifying the enrollment procedures of Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in an effort to ensure access to care for as many children as possible. Other areas of emphasis include the

## *Surgical specialty societies*

<b>Organization/contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Web site</b>
<b>American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery</b> Stephen Duffy, Executive Vice-President American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery 310 South Henry St., Alexandria, VA 22314	703/299-9291	<a href="http://www.facial-plastic-surgery.org">www.facial-plastic-surgery.org</a>
<b>American Academy of Ophthalmology</b> Cathy Greeley Cohen, Vice-President, Governmental Affairs American Academy of Ophthalmology 1101 Vermont Ave., NW, Ste. 700, Washington, DC 20005-3570	202/737-6662	<a href="http://www.eyenet.org">www.eyenet.org</a>
<b>American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons</b> David A. Lovett, Esq., Director of the Washington Office American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons 317 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Ste. 100, Washington, DC 20002	202/546-4430	<a href="http://www.aaos.org">www.aaos.org</a>
<b>American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery</b> Beverly Nissenbaum, Director, Department of Health Policy and Government Affairs American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery One Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3357	703/836-4444	<a href="http://www.entnet.org">www.entnet.org</a>
<b>American Association for Thoracic Surgery</b> Corinne Colgan, Assistant Director, Government American Association for Thoracic Surgery c/o Smith Bucklin & Associates 2025 M St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20036	202/367-1265	<a href="http://www.aats.org">www.aats.org</a>
<b>American Association of Neurological Surgeons</b> Katie Orrico, JD, Director, Washington Office American Association of Neurological Surgeons 725 15th St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20005	202/628-2072	<a href="http://www.neurosurgery.org">www.neurosurgery.org</a>
<b>American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists</b> Lucia DiVenere American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists PO. Box 96920, 409 Twelfth St., SW, Washington, DC 20090-6920	202/638-5577	<a href="http://www.acog.org">www.acog.org</a>
<b>American College of Osteopathic Surgeons</b> Guy D. Beaumont, Executive Director American College of Osteopathic Surgeons 123 N. Henry St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2903	703/684-0416	<a href="http://www.facos.org">www.facos.org</a>
<b>American Pediatric Surgical Association</b> Erin LaFlair, Committee Liaison American Pediatric Surgical Association c/o American College of Surgeons 1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007	202/337-2701	<a href="http://www.eapsa.org">www.eapsa.org</a>
<b>American Society of Bariatric Surgeons</b> Christopher Gallagher, Committee Liaison American Society of Bariatric Surgeons c/o American College of Surgeons 1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007	202/337-2701	<a href="http://www.asbs.org">www.asbs.org</a>
<b>American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery</b> Nancy McCann, Director of Government Relations American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery 4000 Legato Rd., Ste. 850, Fairfax, VA 22033	703/591-2220	<a href="http://www.ascrs.org">www.ascrs.org</a>

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## *Surgical specialty societies* (continued)

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<b>Organization/contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Web site</b>
<b>American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons</b> Erin LaFlair, Committee Liaison American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons c/o American College of Surgeons 1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007	202/337-2701	<a href="http://www.fascrs.org">www.fascrs.org</a>
<b>American Society of General Surgeons</b> Domenic Ruscio, Washington Consultant American Society of General Surgeons c/o Cavarocchi-Ruscio-Dennis Associates 317 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20002	202/546-4732	<a href="http://www.theasgs.org">www.theasgs.org</a>
<b>American Society of Plastic Surgeons</b> Bill Seward, Director of Government Affairs American Society of Plastic Surgeons 444 E. Algonquin Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60005	847/228-9900	<a href="http://www.plasticsurgery.org">www.plasticsurgery.org</a>
<b>American Urological Association</b> Cherie McNett, Washington Representative American Urological Association 1120 North Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201	410/727-1100	<a href="http://www.auanet.org">www.auanet.org</a>
<b>American Urological Association</b> Randolph B. Fenninger, Washington Consultant American Urological Association c/o MARC Associates 1101 Seventeenth St., NW, Ste. 803, Washington, DC 20036-4704	202/833-0007	<a href="http://www.auanet.org">www.auanet.org</a>
<b>Congress of Neurological Surgeons</b> Katie Orrico, JD, Washington Representative Congress of Neurological Surgeons 725 15th St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20005	202/628-2072	<a href="http://www.neurosurgery-online.com">www.neurosurgery-online.com</a>
<b>Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons</b> Erin LaFlair, Committee Liaison Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons c/o American College of Surgeons 1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007	202/337-2701	<a href="http://www.sages.org">www.sages.org</a>
<b>Society of Gynecologic Oncologists</b> Scott Wilber, Washington Representative Society of Gynecologic Oncologists c/o Smith Bucklin & Associates 2025 M St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20036-3309	202/367-1237	<a href="http://www.sgo.org">www.sgo.org</a>
<b>Society of Surgical Oncology</b> Erin LaFlair, Committee Liaison Society of Surgical Oncology c/o American College of Surgeons 1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007	202/337-2701	<a href="http://www.surgonc.org">www.surgonc.org</a>
<b>Society of Thoracic Surgeons</b> Bob Wilbur, Washington Representative Society of Thoracic Surgeons c/o Smith Bucklin & Associates 2025 M St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20036-3309	202/367-1100	<a href="http://www.sts.org">www.sts.org</a>

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prevention of injury due to automobiles and flammable sleepwear, funding for research into the cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and care for children with disabilities. The College has worked closely with the AAP on injury prevention and trauma care issues, as well as the promotion of legislation that would provide coverage for surgical procedures for children with birth defects. For more information about the AAP, contact the DC office at 202/347-8600; their Web address is [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

### **American Nurses Association (ANA)**

The ANA is headquartered in Washington, DC. With 180,000 members, it is one of the largest and strongest voices for the nursing profession. The ANA represents the interests of more than 2.6 million registered nurses nationwide, and its priorities include Medicare reform, patients' rights, safe needle devices, whistleblower protections for health care workers, and adequate reimbursement for health care services. The top priority, however, is health care reform with an emphasis on an expanded role for registered nurses and advanced practice nurses in the delivery of basic and primary health care. The ANA also seeks to obtain additional funds for nurse education and improvements in the health care workplace. To contact the ANA, call 202/651-7000 or visit [www.ana.org](http://www.ana.org).

### **American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)**

The ACEP was founded in 1968 and represents 21,000 emergency medicine physicians. The group is headquartered in Irving, TX, and has had an office in Washington for 17 years. The ACEP has supported many of the same issues as the College, including passage of Patients' Bill of Rights legislation, physician payment reform, and funding for GME. It has also placed major emphasis on issues that uniquely affect emergency physicians, such as the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, injury prevention awareness, and, most recently, emergency room readiness for bioterrorism threats. The ACS has worked closely with the ACEP on trauma system planning and payment issues. The phone number for the ACEP Washington office is 202/728-0610, and its Web site is [www.acep.org](http://www.acep.org)

## ***Hospital groups***

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Other major players in terms of health care advocacy include organizations that represent hospitals and other health care facilities. These organizations are as follows.

### **American Hospital Association (AHA)**

The AHA is a national organization that represents 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, and networks and has 37,000 individual members. Founded in 1898 with offices in Chicago, IL, and Washington, DC, the AHA's stated mission is "advancing health in America." Since the September 11 attacks, the AHA has been placing greater emphasis on disaster readiness. The AHA believes hospitals must be prepared to handle mass-casualty terrorism in close coordination with police, fire, rescue, and other public safety services. The organization's other priorities include responding to the regulations stemming from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, reducing the regulatory burden on providers, resolving the nursing shortage, and improving quality of care. The AHA Washington office may be reached by phone at 202/638-1100 and online at [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).

### **Federation of American Hospitals**

The Federation of American Hospitals is another organization representing for-profit hospitals, ambulatory centers, and other organizations involved in the delivery of health care services. Founded in 1966 with national offices located in Washington, DC, the federation is working to foster the public good through the creation and delivery of quality health care for all people. The organization shares many of the AHA's objectives but also has put structural payment reform for Medicare and Medicaid, mental health and rehabilitation services, and rural health on its agenda for this year. For more information call 202/624-1500 or visit [www.americashospitals.org](http://www.americashospitals.org).

### **Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)**

The AAMC was established in 1876 to work for reform in medical education. Originally charged with representing the interests of medical schools, the organization has evolved into an advocate for

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400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, as well as 90 academic and professional societies. In its quest to improve the health of the public by enhancing the effectiveness of academic medicine, the AAMC concentrates its efforts on achieving adequate funding for the National Institutes of Health, biomedical research, and GME. Workforce issues concerning resident work hours and the nursing shortage continue to be organizational priorities. Since 1997, the AAMC has been successful in working to implement refinements in the Balanced Budget Amendment's provisions that center on reimbursement for teaching hospitals. The AAMC is headquartered in Washington, DC, and may be reached by calling 202/828-0400 or by visiting [www.hiaa.org](http://www.hiaa.org).

### Insurance groups

Another category of health advocacy organizations comprises the insurance industry. Representative groups in this classification are as follows.

#### **Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA)**

The HIAA represents more than 300 private health care insurers. The HIAA is a diligent and often formidable advocate on both Capitol Hill and with the executive branch. In fact, it was listed in *Fortune's* top 25 most influential associations in America for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001. The HIAA's primary purpose is to advocate on behalf of the industry at the state and federal levels. It is also well known as a provider of self-study courses on health insurance and managed care.

Like other health insurance associations, the HIAA frequently represents a differing view on issues of importance to physicians. For example, the HIAA opposes legislation that would expand health plan liability and proposals to establish antitrust statute exemptions that would enable physicians to negotiate collectively with insurers. Additionally, the HIAA supports legislation that preserves the employer-based system of health coverage, choice in the marketplace, improvements in the Medicare+ Choice program, access to care for the uninsured, and tax incentives for long-term care insurance. The HIAA is headquartered in Washington, DC, and can be contacted at 202/824-1600 or online at [www.hiaa.org](http://www.hiaa.org).

#### **American Association of Health Plans (AAHP)**

The AAHP is the principal association advocating for the managed care industry, including health maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, and utilization review organizations. The AAHP is headquartered in Washington, DC, and the group actively advocates managed care positions. It also provides communications programs, quality assessment/improvement programs for health plans, and research and educational programs on the latest developments in managed care. The AAHP shares many of the HIAA's views but also pursues prescription drug coverage, HIPAA reform, patient safety, and anti-discrimination laws and regulation as part of its agenda. The AAHP can be reached by calling 202/778-3200 or by visiting their Web site at [www.aahp.org](http://www.aahp.org).

### Other surgical organizations

As regulatory intrusion into surgical practice intensifies and the resources required to address the associated problems are stretched increasingly thin, surgical organizations like the College are seeking more effective ways to garner congressional and regulatory attention and achieve appropriate action on pressing issues. The College can amplify its work through effective programs of alliance- and coalition-building, as well as through the cooperation of Fellows who are willing to help illustrate the implications of a proposed policy. In many cases, a majority of the health organizations in Washington are working toward a similar goal—the creation of an efficient, accessible, affordable, and high-quality health care system. The challenge remains in finding consensus and identifying a “win-win proposition” among diverse membership organizations and using that collective voice most effectively.

In addition to the organizations previously listed, the chart on pages 16-17 identifies surgical groups that are among the strongest allies of the College. Along with tracking their positions and advocacy efforts on their Web sites, Fellows are encouraged to periodically monitor the College's efforts, which are summarized on the ACS Web site in the Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/facs/home/>. 