



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY
ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
April 6-9, 2011
Mid-Year Forum
Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, D.C.

I urge other attending physicians to consider that having residents and fellows attend the Mid-Year Forum is an investment in the future. Like it or not, medicine is politicized. The more we educate up-and-coming ophthalmologists on these political issues and empower them to navigate the system and find their niche in how they can help, the more we are empowering our profession, our staff and our patients to succeed. A paradigm shift is necessary to view residents and fellows attending the Mid-Year Forum and getting educated on the politics of ophthalmology as integral to the future of ophthalmology as well as to the delivery of excellent eye care. I was surprised and happy to see that some ophthalmology programs had multiple residents and fellows attending the Mid-Year Forum, and I hope more programs encourage this practice. (2010 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)

Program Goals:

- a) Engage and educate Members in Training (residents and those undergoing fellowship training) early on as to the importance of advocating for their profession (training future advocates for patients and for the profession);
- b) Help Members in Training understand the importance of membership and *active* involvement in their respective state ophthalmology and subspecialty societies; and
- c) Expose Members in Training to some of the critical issues in medicine being discussed by leaders in ophthalmology during the Mid-Year Forum and Council sessions. (Note: The Council is the policy advisory body to the Academy's Board of Trustees)

Program Elements

- Congressional Advocacy Day (CAD) Dinner Briefing - April 6
- Briefing/Reception for Advocacy Ambassador Program Participants – April 7
- CAD Visits – April 7
- Mid-Year Forum Sessions – April 7-8
- Council Meeting – April 8-9

Program Partners:

American Academy of Ophthalmology

- Waives Mid-Year Forum registration fee (\$175) for Advocacy Ambassadors.
- Provides a special onsite briefing/reception for Advocacy Ambassadors with Academy, state and subspecialty society leaders
- Provides mentors for Advocacy Ambassadors' visits with members of Congress
- Formally recognizes Advocacy Ambassadors during the Mid-Year Forum Opening Session and Welcome Reception and Dinner
- Extends a special invitation to Advocacy Ambassadors to attend both the Surgical Scope Fund and OPHTHPAC receptions for significant contributors for minimal contributions

Participating State, Subspecialty and Specialized Interest Societies

- Sponsors the travel expenses to the Mid-Year Forum for Advocacy Ambassadors selected to attend. (State, subspecialty and specialized interest societies each determine: a) their willingness to participate; and, b) their level of financial support)
- Provides society leader "mentors" for visits by Advocacy Ambassadors to members of Congress as part of Congressional Advocacy Day

Participating Training Programs

- Allows time in the Advocacy Ambassador's work schedule to attend the Mid-Year Forum without vacation penalty
- Where possible, helps the state ophthalmology society fund the Advocacy Ambassador's travel (transportation/housing)
- Allows the Advocacy Ambassador "podium time" to relay to fellow ophthalmologists-in-training what he/she has learned at the Mid-Year Forum

Testimonials from Advocacy Ambassador Program Participants:

Simply put, Congressional Advocacy Day has been an invaluable experience. On Capitol Hill, I witnessed and participated in the fascinating process of policy-making, which by the way would go on without us if we chose to be absent from the process. As important as it is to have an opinion, even more so is to have a voice that is heard. The Mid-Year Forum was equally eye-opening. It was inspiring to see ophthalmologists from every state take time out of their busy schedules to come together in common cause to deliberate over national and regional issues, and to advocate for the safety and care of our patients. I come away better informed and more aware... **(2009 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)**

The Forum was invaluable towards my understanding of issues that affect ophthalmology and the patients we serve. In addition, it clearly taught me the political mechanism to addressing these issues. The Legislative Briefing was helpful and provided good preparation for the Congressional Advocacy Day. The Mid-Year Forum expanded my knowledge. I thoroughly enjoyed and reaped great benefit from attending the Great Lakes Regional and Council Subspecialty Section meetings and the Council CAR hearings. I recommend all Ambassadors take advantage and attend the Council meetings. In short, the Mid-Year Forum exceeded my expectations. **(2007 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)**