

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY
ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
April 22-25, 2009 Mid-Year Forum
Capital Hilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.

Had it not been for my experience at the 2008 MYF, I may never have thought about legislative issues facing our profession. But now I see that there are two faces to the practice of ophthalmology – the clinical & the legislative. And while it is certainly easier to just stay in practice & not get involved, I discovered that you must play a role if you want to have a voice in the future of ophthalmology. (2008 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- April 22-23
- Mid-Year Forum Sessions – April 23-24
- Council Meeting – April 24-25

Program Partners:

American Academy of Ophthalmology

- Waives Mid-Year Forum registration fee (\$175) for Advocacy Ambassadors.
- Provides a special onsite briefing 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 the OPHTHPAC reception for significant contributors for a minimal fee

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:

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 hearing on CARs. 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 – undergoing fellowship training in IL)

We need to focus our attention on training medical students and residents on the importance of "being involved". This will not provide an immediate relief to our low PAC dollars, but think of this as an investment in our profession's future. (2005 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant – resident from Texas)

My goal is to pass on what I learned at the Mid-Year Forum so that medical students and residents interested in ophthalmology can become more involved. As residents, we need to prepare ourselves intellectually, surgically, and politically. The political process is crucial in preserving a high standard of care for our patients by fighting optometric scope expansion across the country. (2004 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant – resident from Iowa)
