MEMORANDUM

TO: American Academy of Ophthalmology Advocates
FROM: Governmental Affairs Division
DATE: Jan. 23, 2019
RE: Newly Elected Legislators Suggested Talking Points

The new Congress is sworn in and already jumping into legislative business, and the Academy has a tough challenge in ensuring all 97 new legislators are up-to-speed on our profession’s issues.

We have provided some suggested talking points below for you to use during your future communications with the new legislators. We suggest that you not make policy requests, but rather introduce/remind these lawmakers about:

1. Who we are
2. The patients that we serve
3. Your ability to serve as a resource for health policy solutions

Things to keep in mind

• Talking points should be as specific to your practice and community as possible.

• Consider what in a legislator’s own background might connect with ophthalmology: patient access to care, veterans, family eye conditions, telehealth, etc.

• Remind them of your/the Academy’s history of support – anything we need to thank them for in previous state, local work, or campaign. Academy staff is always available to help you find this information. Contact Megan Tweed at mtweed@aao.org for assistance.

• Invite them to visit your local clinic, practice or facility.

• Notify them that local ophthalmologists will meet in D.C. in April for Mid-Year Forum 2019.

Suggested Talking Points

1. Ophthalmology 101
   a. Explain to your lawmakers what you do as an ophthalmologist and how that differs from other eye care professionals.
   b. Share an Academy handout with legislators that explains the difference between an ophthalmologist, optometrist and optician.
c. Discuss the concerns we have as a profession with scope-of-practice issues on the federal and state level.

2. Medical Research Funding
   a. The Academy always advocates for more research funding through the National Eye Institute and the Department of Defense to create more effective treatments that can save sight and protect lives.
   b. Discuss the importance of research funding in our field and ensure the legislator knows how impactful each new treatment can be for patients.

3. Veterans’ Eye Care
   a. The Academy is a strong ally of veterans and works closely with ophthalmologists who work for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that veterans receive high-quality eye care services.
   b. Ophthalmologists at the Atlanta VA Medical Center developed an innovative tele-eye program, Technology-based Eye Care Services (TECS), to expand access to basic eye care services for veterans who may not have access to specialty eye services, especially in rural areas.
   c. Be sure to mention the VA TECs program and share the benefits it has on veterans’ eye care, such as earlier diagnosis and treatment of serious eye diseases.

4. Regulatory Relief
   a. Physicians need regulatory relief from burdensome requirements that negatively impact delivery of patient care and reduce face-to-face communication between physicians and their patients.
   b. Administrative burdens such as prior authorization or step therapy are intended by health insurers to reduce costs, but interfere with the physician/patient relationship instead.
   c. Encourage your legislator to support upcoming efforts that reduce administrative burdens.