

Fall Council Meeting: Oct. 28, 2018

Summary of each Region's round table discussions: *How do you reach out to your legislatures?*

Great Lakes Region

Ohio Ophthalmological Society

- Focus remains building key contacts in legislature and specifically with those on health committee.
- State society is leveraging ties with state medical association.
- Todd Baker, MD, spoke about efforts to build relationships to ensure physician perspective can be heard. Also spoke about importance of building ties to candidates in election cycles, like 2018, as they can play an important role in the future.

Illinois Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Major challenges continue to exist in Illinois with ODs pushing for ability to do surgical procedures.
- Dr. Hasan spoke to challenges with optometry seeking to achieve priorities through rule-making process in state legislature.
- Reiterated what Ohio mentioned in terms of building relationships with members of the legislature, mentioning that they had a state senator that opposed them and now they have hired him on as a lobbyist.

Michigan Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Expecting big change in state legislature, including many newly elected members, and have opportunity for engagement with new administration.
- Spoke to need for defining ophthalmology in better terms than optometric opponents, improving way that ophthalmology advocates for profession.
- Identifying new interesting ways to engage with legislators is a focus, including visiting Lansing.

Indiana Academy of Ophthalmology

- No major scope battles in Indiana but working to improve ways to get state society members involved and engaged with legislators.
- Spoke to effort to make things easy on state society members, providing names/emails of legislators on their state meeting badges.

Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology

- Quiet legislatively in Wisconsin but continue to focus on building relationships and monitoring optometry action.

Heartland Region

Iowa Academy of Ophthalmology

- Met with legislators, hosted meetings and tours at clinics and practices.
- Contributed to key campaigns.
- Hosted a state capitol day in January.
- Participated in the state specialty society's physician day, which was very effective.
- Scope of practice fight- every Wednesday members would have meetings with 3-4 legislators at the state capitol.
- There is also an ophthalmologist running for office in the State Senate.
- Have experienced a lack of PAC contributions from private practice physicians, as they prefer to contribute to candidates directly.

Kansas Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Optometry's PAC has \$240,000 and appears to be gearing up for a large-scale legislative battle.
- Need more financial support as ophthalmology's state PAC does not have a comparable amount of financial resources.
- State society is working with VoterVoice to set up a grassroots system.
- They are working to establish a PAC reporting system and hire a lobbyist.
- Discussed the red flags in catching a hazardous bill in the policy pipeline and how to address it. They discussed the need for strategies to get ahead of these bills before they gain traction.

Minnesota Academy of Ophthalmology

- Members offered to host legislators for tours/meetings at practices and facilities.
- New this year, Minnesota Academy of Ophthalmology hosted two physician legislators to address their membership and provide their unique perspective.
- Also, new this year, they began coordinating an Ophthalmology Day at the state capitol.

Missouri Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Holds an annual Eye Screening Day, also known as a Health Review Day in Jefferson City.
- The goal of the event is to bring legislators to practices and connect lawmakers and their staff with local ophthalmologists that can deliver care and create new connections.
- Roughly 60 patients attend the event annually.
- During their Annual Meeting, the Missouri Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons host an advocacy event aimed at connecting ophthalmologists with lawmakers in the state legislature.
- The event is modeled after the Academy's Congressional Advocacy Day.
- The state society also has a PAC and scope of practice fund to contribute to leadership candidates and champions and to assist in legislative battles on the state level.

Nebraska Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Hosted a Glaucoma Screening Day
- Now partnering with Nebraska Medical Association to host a breakfast and meet with legislators.
- Fundraising has been a challenge- trying out a subscription method for PAC checks.
- Expecting a scope of practice bill in January.

North Dakota Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- North Dakota Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons hosts A Doctor A Day program that allows for one doctor to meet with legislators daily to discuss important policy concerns.
- North Dakota Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons also mentioned that they recently had a lunch meeting with Candidate Kelly Armstrong.

South Dakota Academy of Ophthalmology

- Partnered with the South Dakota Medical Society to coordinate a Doctor of the Day program at the state capitol. However, there is not a huge amount of ophthalmology engagement in this event.
- South Dakota Academy of Ophthalmology has a small PAC that works with the South Dakota State Medical Association to vet candidates.
- Looking at finding relationships between members, patients and legislators.

Metro East Region

Pennsylvania Academy of Ophthalmology

- The society held two political fundraisers for "rank and file" legislators.
- The society held a fundraiser for the Pennsylvania House Speaker.
- The society held a fundraiser for the House Majority Whip.
- Political fundraising strategy has been focused on targeting legislative "choke points" – meaning those legislators powerful enough to block any legislation they deem necessary.
- A key challenge has been finding enough doctors to put in the logistical work and to give money.
- Since few people are willing to donate, it becomes necessary to illustrate optometric scope of practice attempts as a "crisis." This in turn also helps build membership.
- Younger ophthalmologists need to become more active

New York State Ophthalmological Society

- Successful lobbying day included participation of residents.
- Hosted a dinner the night before presenting campaign donations and legislative awards to certain legislators.
 - Key committee members were invited to the dinner.
- The New York Ophthalmological Society is currently in flux with search to retain a new lobbying firm.

Delaware Academy of Ophthalmology

- Since there is no ophthalmological society political action committee, they are heavily integrated with the state medical society.
- DELPAC is the major political action committee for the state's House of Medicine
- The Medical society hosts major legislative fundraisers and pools money with other specialty societies.
- This gives the medical society the strongest voice on issues affecting all specialties.

New Jersey Academy of Ophthalmology

- The society focuses its fundraising on "choke points" - legislators powerful enough to block any legislation they deem necessary.
- Senate President
- House Speaker
- House/Senate Majority Leader
- Key Committee Chairs
- The society's lobbying firm represents many interests that raise large sums for state legislators. Fundraisers hosted by the lobbying firm help the society get recognition among the targeted legislators

Mid-Atlantic Region

Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Ophthalmologists are active in the state medical society's "Doctor of the Day" program at the state capitol.
- Lobbyists take this opportunity to take doctors to visit state legislators at the capitol.
- The society has a grassroots network organized by county and region.
- The society uses that same network to raise money for the society's political action committee.

Virginia Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- The society engages state legislators by holding fundraisers for key legislators, including the Speaker of the House, key committee members, and leadership.
- The society engages legislators with visits to ambulatory surgery centers and the offices of ophthalmologists.

West Virginia Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- The society relies heavily on long term relationships with key legislators.
- The society is seeking new ways to engage members, given that they will be defending against a scope expansion bill in 2019.
- Though West Virginia has low participation rate for the state society political action committee, it currently stands at 40K (but in contrast to 120K for the state optometric PAC).

Kentucky Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Kentucky works with residency programs to get students to the state capitol.
- The society encourages local doctors to deliver PAC checks at fundraisers.
- Members participate at a "White Coat Day" at the state capitol.
- A silent auction at the society's annual meeting has been an effective way to raise PAC funds.

Washington DC Metropolitan Ophthalmological Society

- The society's outreach focuses on relationship building with the DC City Council.
- The society is highly dependent on an experienced lobbyist who maintains strong relationships with the city council.
- The society submitted a letter opposing a scope expansion effort to the DC City Council.

Mountain West Region

Colorado Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- The Colorado society discussed their meeting with their local representative and emphasized with persistence building relationships can be accomplished in order to invite leaders to witness eye surgery and tour surgery centers. The difficult part is establishing meetings in order to accomplish this.

Idaho Society of Ophthalmology

- The Idaho Society of Ophthalmology currently utilizes a lobbyist from the Idaho Medical Association. They are currently fighting a scope battle. Optometry is attempting to expand their scope of practice and intend to do so for the coming months. No limits on what they can or cannot do. Optometrists are able to do SLTs and YAG. Currently has a meeting in November to strategize and make action plans.

Montana Academy of Ophthalmology

- Attempt to help connect physicians with legislators. Taking into account no one reads two-page letters, the Montana Academy of Ophthalmology is attempting to have an infographic.
- There is great difficulty in reaching out on their own and inquire how they can get their own members to take action.

Utah Ophthalmology Society

- Regularly meets with legislators and currently has a legislator that they sponsor. Usually will have medical talks with legislators and Townhall events. Some ophthalmologists have taken legislators out to lunch and donate to their campaign in conjunction. Currently have an LDP project where legislators were invited to their surgery centers to see how surgery is performed, however some ophthalmologists were not interested so it did not work well.
- There are some practices that have PA's doing intravitreal injections. This is a slippery slope that optometry can use in their scope battles. Although PA's are trained with scalpels and have a surgical background (while optometrists do not) this may not be so apparent to legislators.

Wyoming Ophthalmological Society

- Needs a sponsor to bring a bill forward. It is easier to get a bill passed if sponsored through a committee rather than a single sponsor. The current bill does not list specifics as to what is excluded for what an optometrist can perform. Ex; blephs vs. laser bleph.

New England Region

Rhode Island Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- Hard to recruit new, young physicians to engage on the political side Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians
- Society does a Doctor Day.
- Each member was assigned someone who was running for office – get the candidates before they're “big and famous.”
- Driveway conversations during the campaign – reiterate that physicians can be a resource.
- “How can we help you?” Candidates aren't as up-to-speed on the issues as you think, so discussions and friendly conversation is very helpful
- Listen and fill in the blanks
- Forget what your political leanings are, and advocate for the profession
- Physicians have trouble putting themselves in other people's shoes, so the leaders need to be out there and “door-knock” for candidates
- Offer to help phone-bank for a candidate – they remember who had their backs during the campaign
- New CAR for more money for State Affairs – Board of Trustees didn't support, so they want to put more pressure on them to up the budget – get Bob Palmer an assistant and more cash to fight state battles *this year*
- New CAR to make the scientific speakers disclose their SSF/OPHTHPAC giving, and only give them podium time at AAO events if they give to the funds – then make them include it in their disclosures to make it more socially acceptable to be known as a donor
 - Massachusetts supports the disclosure idea, but concerns about the forced donations
- Publish lists of donors by state and shame members into giving
- Giving “score card” – Issue a member participation score that includes their giving status

Vermont Ophthalmological Society

- Meet-the-Candidates forum – got good membership turnout
- Massachusetts Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons
- Luck as to who is friends with lobbyists.
- Hard to get members to go meet with lawmakers – so very lobbyist-driven
- Hosted a fundraiser, secured the support of a key GOP lawmaker Maine Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons
- For candidates, it can be like drinking water out of a firehose, so be patient with them, guide them
- Meet your lawmakers at the early stages of their career, and stick with them throughout their career
- Tufts-Maine invites lawmakers to be “a med student” for a day to shed light on what it takes – could this be replicated for ophthalmology?

New Hampshire Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons

- We have 450 representatives for a state of a million – we focus on legislation to pin-point who to target for PAC contributions

Pacific Coast Region

Hawaii Ophthalmological Society

- Importance of going to MYF, getting to meet your representative and their staff person.
- Also, important to drop by their office and build relationships with staff. Unfortunately, congress person took a position during recent Supreme Court nominee hearings that was so alienating that it is hard to know what to do now.
- Response from group: focus on patient advocacy. It is not a right or left issue.
- Get to know the state lobbyists. Hawaii shares lobbyist with the medical society, which is very effective.

California Academy of Eye Physicians & Surgeons

- Hosting fundraisers the earlier in the politicians career the better is a good way to build relationships. They provide an opportunity to meet family members, who may have personal eye issues that are important to them.
- Get to know congressmembers' staff. Even though there is high turnover, build relationships when possible. Follow up on MYF contacts.
- Prior to primary involving Congressman Stark, patients and others were invited to a townhall meeting held at an ophthalmology ASC. The candidate defeating Congressman Stark was very grateful and remembers this effort, keeps in touch.

Washington Academy of Eye Physicians & Surgeons

- Fundraisers for congressional and state legislators build relationships. Academy used eblasts to state society plus other friends to let them know the social gathering is a fundraiser.
- Make MYF contacts a priority and follow up. Repeated contacts are critical.

Oregon Academy of Ophthalmology

- The academy was able to organize a program on the medical substance of particular legislation and present it before the legislature. This depended upon the relationships that had been established.

Alaska Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons

- It all seems to be about relationships. The optometry Board has been trying to establish a weekend instruction program in YAG laser now that it is allowed. They are pushing the self-regulation button. They have the upper hand in relationships with legislature.

Nevada Academy of Ophthalmology

- Ophthalmologist stepping up contributions as they see the Optometry Board itself is proposing legislation.
- As scope battle heats up, pressure put on individual ophthalmologists who rely on referrals from optometrists. They have the power to decimate a practice. How can this be avoided?
- Responses: this starts at the training stage. It involves understanding what constitutes an ethical practice. Physicians cannot operate their practices in response to fear or veiled threats. They can work with primary care physicians and become active in their state societies. If they have evidence that an organization such as the state optometric society has them on a "blacklist" or boycott list, they can get help from their state Attorney General or Federal Trade Commission representative.

Tornado Belt Region

Arkansas Ophthalmological Society

- Get on the House calendar to host luncheon for legislators, staff.
 - Each day of the legislative session, Arkansas organizations can host luncheon for legislators, constitutional officers and staff. The luncheon sponsor is listed on the House schedule and the sponsor is announced on the floor. This sponsorship offers the organization a meet/greet opportunity with legislators.
 - Note: It is not permitted in AR to take an individual legislator to lunch or dinner.
- Legislator match: identifying ophthalmologists to pair with each legislator. The society using medical society members to fill-in when there is no ophthalmologist in the district.
- Screening event at the legislature or in the legislator's district
- Invite a legislator to tour a simulation lab
 - It was suggested that the society make certain that physicians associated with any lab toured support the society's position on key issues.

Oklahoma Academy of Ophthalmology

- Rebuilding PAC; use physicians to deliver PAC checks
- Use proactive legislation (e.g., support passage of early eye drop refill bill) as an opportunity to get to know legislators on a less contentious issue.

Texas Ophthalmological Association

- Participate with the Texas Medical Association (TMA) in the "White Coat Invasion" at the Texas legislature
- Use MDs to deliver PAC donation checks; try to have legislator come to the physician office to receive the check, as this can allow the physician to show the legislator the technology/diagnostic equipment found in an ophthalmology practice, as well as provide for a good photo op.
- Looking at TMA relationships with the Louisiana State Medical Society as a means of addressing cross-border concerns.

Southeastern Region

In the Southeastern Regional Meeting, Councilors discussed the 2018 OD surgery bills and the effort that is required to preserve surgical and patient safety

- NC and GE faced recent optometry surgery battles; and AL, FL, and PR face 2019 OD surgery initiatives
- PR faces a party shift in the Legislature which requires grassroots action to maintain old friends as well as make new friends
- Much discussion of raising funds within the state society to battle OD bills that threaten surgical and patient standards
- FL pointed out that ophthalmology had to belly up to the bar to raise and spend funds required to protect surgical standards – had raised \$1 million for PAC program – followed with individual meetings
- All agreed the political dollars as well as state grassroots are required to protect patients
- FL highlighted that FSO Board members are strongly urged to contribute \$1K to state PAC; \$1k to SSF and \$1K to OPHTHPAC.
- Florida also challenged all the states to match the \$25K FSO contribution to the SSF.

- SC highlighted that states might want to consider different tiers of membership with different required contribution levels to participate
- NC highlighted how the Society determined who had the power in the Senate/House to stop the OD surgery bill and then NCSEPS set out to make sure the patient safety targets had well-funded campaigns for reelection – targeted Senate President, and Senate Rules Cmte and House Health Cmte members – Key patient safety Senate/House members were re-elected in November 2018 elections.
- Key to success NCEPS leadership -one-on-one meetings and calls with members – email is not effective in this effort – must be MD to MD.
- GA and NC pointed out to the states the effectiveness of creating and implementing a fund within the society dedicated specifically to advocacy
- Question of Medicaid – ODs say ophthalmologists do not see Medicaid patients - FSO researched and found that the OD statement was bogus
- All states agreed – a strong lobby team is required in the Surgery by Surgeons battles
- Residency Programs
 - PR ophthalmologists hosted a talent show to raise funds for the island's ophthalmology residency program