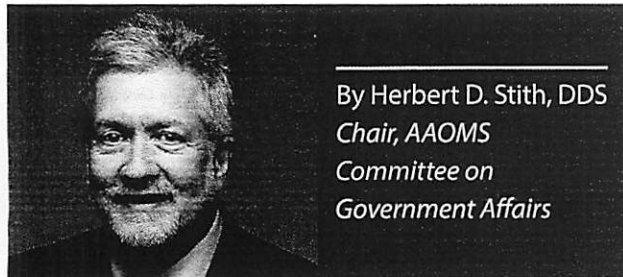




State Advocates Forum: Preparing for issues



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It seems every year, our state societies must combat a new issue. Unlike federal issues, and due to shortened legislative cycles, state-based initiatives move quickly through the legislative and regulatory processes.

Anesthesia, insurance and scope of practice issues – all critical to OMS practices – are generally regulated at the state level, making activism in state government affairs just as important as engagement in federal issues. In addition, state legislatures have a tendency to notice issues from other states.

Suddenly, what passed in one state may suddenly pop up in the legislatures of five other states the following year. In order for the specialty to defend itself from such trends, our professional state lobbyists and advocates must be educated on these issues and be prepared before a bill is introduced in our state legislature.

In November, I participated in the 22nd Annual AAOMS State Advocates Forum – the Association’s annual state lobbyist conference – in Scottsdale, Ariz. Every year, the lobbyists and professional state advocates of the state OMS and dental societies gather to discuss issues currently affecting the states and those issues anticipated to be addressed in the future.

As chair of the AAOMS Committee on Government Affairs (CGA), this is the second time I have participated in this meeting, and I am always amazed at the sheer breadth of issues that affect our specialty and are addressed by our professional advocates.

“After attending this meeting every year for nearly a decade, I find a great sense of comradery as we continue to work toward the same goal: to help our members and their patients,” said Laura Givens, executive director of the Virginia Society of OMS. “I always come back home after the Forum with not only a wealth of information and ideas but also a reassurance of support.”

In total, 38 individuals from 27 states participated in the meeting, including myself, AAOMS President Dr. Brett L. Ferguson, President-Elect Dr. A. Thomas Indresano and AAOMS Trustee and CGA Liaison Dr. B.D. Tiner. All Forum participants must be approved by their respective state OMS society president to attend the meeting while representing the state society.

During the Forum, states shared information on what worked and did not work when addressing a particular issue, and they learned what they may face in the future. The knowledge gained in just two short half-day sessions is invaluable, but more important are the connections formed between state advocates.

Significant discussion occurred on the various pediatric anesthesia battles we have been facing over the past several years. Attendees also discussed their state’s experiences with specialty advertising challenges and efforts to combat prescription drug abuse.

“It is important to see what is being moved by other legislatures, because often what happens in one state will pop up in yours eventually, and being prepared for the challenges with facts and more information is key to being successful in defeating or advancing bills,” said Nick Kratz, lobbyist for the Pennsylvania Society of OMS.

All state OMS societies should consider sending a representative to this meeting. The 2018 AAOMS State Advocates Forum will be held Nov. 2-3 in Amelia Island, Fla. The invitation-only event has limited funding available for participants. For more information, contact AAOMS Government Affairs staff at 800-822-6637. ■

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