

# Update from the Government and National Affairs Committee

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## **WITH FALL UPON US AND THE YEAR SO FAR CONSUMED WITH THE STRESS**

of the novel coronavirus, many of us would be willing to take a mulligan for 2020. We all hope for a better next year and a vaccine. Nevertheless, the leadership of AAEM continues to fight for the Academy's membership at both the federal and state levels. We remain active on several important issues, including

peer review/due process, balance/surprise billing, and independent/unsupervised practice by PAs and NPs.

Academy leaders and other selected AAEM members typically visit Washington, D.C. at least once a year, to sit down with Members of Congress and staff, as well as executive branch regulators, to discuss issues important to emergency physicians and our patients. Due to SARS-CoV-19, our visit on September 15, 2020 was virtual instead of actual. During these many virtual visits we shared our insights on the pandemic and the other issues mentioned above with Members on both sides of the aisle.

We accomplished a number of things, including securing additional support for federal legislation (HR 6910) to guarantee due process rights for emergency physicians. This is one of AAEM's highest legislative priorities and one we have been pushing for several years. Medical staff due process rights are critical to emergency physicians, and afford us the protection from arbitrary and unfair treatment we need to be strong advocates for our patients. We also continued to educate legislators and staffers on solutions to the balance/surprise billing problem, emphasizing the importance of protecting patients rather than the insurance industry, while making sure rural hospitals and independent physician groups aren't wiped out in the process. A memorable highlight of these virtual visits was a Zoom meeting with eight Members of Congress hosted by Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA), an emergency physician and a champion of our specialty. We also had a great conversation with Rep. Mark Green (R-TN), the House's other emergency physician. Our final meeting of the day was with Dr. Ronny Jackson, a Texas emergency physician who will soon join Drs. Ruiz and Green in Congress. While it was certainly a unique experience to do these visits virtually, the Academy felt it was important to convey our message to Congress even while the Capitol remained closed to the public. We were excited by the level of engagement we saw from the Members and senior staff we met with, and it was a highly productive day of virtual meetings.

On a state legislative note, Dr. Maria Paone and the EM Workforce Committee have been very active on the independent/unsupervised PA and NP practice issue, which the Academy views as a threat to patient welfare and safety. We are monitoring the activity of these bills and intervening on the state level when appropriate. The Academy encourages all its members to be active at the state level and to become familiar with your state representative and senator. Another great way to become engaged at the state level is join your state medical association. The expense is well worth it and many states have very engaged and active medical associations. And join your AAEM state chapter division if you have one!

Don't forget to vote on or before November 3. Keep safe, and if you have any questions on legislative or regulatory issues, AAEM's Government and National Affairs Committee is always ready to help. ●