



American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
Voice, Value, Vision

Government Affairs Committee (GAC)
e-newsletter
Issue #1 – October 2009

This is the inaugural issue of GAC's e-newsletter. One of the strategic goals of our committee for 2009-2010 is to improve communication to the broader ASCLS membership and to provide a more consistent face to our members, in keeping with President Mary Ann McLane's "provide the face" initiative.

In this issue...

- Introduction to "ASCLS Advocates for You"
- How one ASCLS member has been advocating with her elected officials
- An update on Healthcare reform and how it may impact the laboratory profession
- Early reminder about the ASCLS/CLMA/ASCP/AMT Legislative Symposium

ASCLS Advocates for You!!
By Cindy Johnson, GAC Vice Chair

The ASCLS Government Affairs Committee (GAC) is excited to present a new section on the ASCLS website, **ASCLS Advocates for You**. The GAC has identified the need to provide information and education to our members on legislative and regulatory issues that impact the laboratory profession. You can locate the **ASCLS Advocates for You** in the **Quick Link** section located on the right hand side of the ASCLS home page or by going directly to <http://www.ascls.org/currentevents/index.asp>

The **ASCLS Advocates for You** includes:

- *Positions and Policies Advancing Our Profession*. This section contains information on ASCLS initiatives such as the *Levels of Practice* and *Doctorate in Clinical Laboratory Science*.
- *ASCLS Federal Activities* which includes positions of the society on several recent key issues such as competitive bidding, modernization of the clinical laboratory fee schedule and Title VII funding for laboratory educational programs.
- *ASCLS Advocacy Center* provides an avenue to effortlessly communicate with your congressional leaders on "real-time" laboratory issues.
- In the section, *Action Alert*, you are able to get the current legislative alerts and updates. This section also provides you with the Capitol Hill basics (remember 9th grade Civics class).

- *ASCLS Responds-Speaking Out for Our Members*, you can access position statements that ASCLS leadership has made on our behalf.

It is the *ASCLS Advocacy Center* and *Action Alert* links that will connect you with the new *CapWiz* functionality that enables ASCLS members to more easily contact their Senators and Representatives in Washington DC. Late this summer, we were able to utilize the CapWiz tools to send alerts to our members and allow them to send letters to Congress in opposition to a proposed inclusion of a 20% Medicare Laboratory Co-payment in the health care reform legislation.

The GAC would like to encourage you to utilize the resources on the ASCLS website. If you want us to include additional information to assist you with your advocacy journey please let us know.

Health Care Tele-Town Hall

This past July, several laboratory professionals from CentraCare Laboratory Services (St. Cloud, MN) were invited to participate with other constituents from our district in a Telephone Town Hall meeting hosted by Congresswoman Michele Bachmann. The format for this telephone town hall was similar to a live call-in radio talk show. Participants heard an update from Congresswoman Bachmann on Washington Congress' health care reform proposals. Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D. (R-TX), co-sponsor of HR 1452 "Medicare Clinical Diagnostic Laboratory Fee Schedule Modernization Act of 2009" was also present to provide insight and answer questions.

Cindy Johnson, GAC Vice-Chair, was fortunate to get some "air time" and thank Rep. Burgess for his support of HR 1452. She highlighted the important role that clinical laboratory professionals play on the health care team and stressed that the laboratory community needs to be at the table as an active participant in discussion of health care reform. Both congressional members acknowledged the great work of laboratory professionals and thanked us for our contributions to health care.

We encourage you as laboratory professionals to stay connected with your elected officials. Invite them to come to your laboratory and see the great work you do. For more information on contacting your congressional leaders, visit the ASCLS website and click on Quick Links – ASCLS Advocates for You. <http://www.ascls.org/currentevents/index.asp>

Health Care Reform continues to be the focus of the Government Affairs Committee, especially with the Senate Finance Committee's passage on October 13 of the Baucus bill. Chairman Max Baucus says the legislation will cost less than \$850 billion over 10 years and would not increase the deficit. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which put the bill's total cost at a lower \$774 billion, says the bill would actually reduce the deficit by \$49 billion between 2010 and 2019. This bill would call for the health care industry, including the laboratory, to pay for the reform. Beginning in 2010, insurance companies would have to **pay an annual** total of \$6 billion; pharmaceutical companies, \$2.3 billion; medical-device makers, \$4 billion. The current version of the bill eliminated a proposed "laboratory tax" (based on

market share), which would have resulted in \$750 million annually. An alternative, 1.75% reduction in the Medicare Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule update for 2011-2015 was included. The rationale for this alternative was as follows:

- The lab tax was going to probably be in the range of 2.5% -- and could be much higher -- on ALL lab revenue including Medicare (CLFS AND physician fee schedule) and non-Medicare revenue. Everything. And no deduction for other taxes.
- The tax would have started in 2010 and is PERMANENT and would be impossible to reduce or repeal.
- The tax would have been assessed against virtually ALL independent and hospital laboratories, and any physician office labs that do more than \$500,000 a year in revenue.
- All hospitals' outpatient and outreach revenue would have been taxed.

At worst, we are trading a permanent 2-3% new Federal provider tax on virtually all laboratories for all revenue for a time-limited (5 years) 1.75% reduction in the CLFS update.

Save the dates for the 2010 Legislative Symposium
March 15-16, 2010 in Washington, DC

This event is jointly sponsored by ASCLS, CLMA, ASCP and AMT. This is an opportunity for each of you to "provide the face" of our profession with our elected senators and representatives.

Once you attend this event, you will be hooked. The opportunity to provide your expertise and advocate for the issues impacting our profession is one of the benefits of ASCLS membership.

Let's make it a goal to have all of states represented!

For more information contact Rick Panning, GAC chair at rick.panning@allina.com or 612-262-5012

You are receiving this message as a member service of ASCLS.

If you would prefer not to receive future email messages, send an email to "[Remove](#)" to opt-out.

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
6701 Democracy Blvd., Suite 300, Bethesda, MD 20817-1574
301-657-2768 www.ascls.org