

# Adv☆cacy 2017

A YEAR IN REVIEW

This *Year in Review* details how the American Academy of Audiology mobilized its legislative, regulatory, and political resources to engage on a number of different issues facing audiologists.

The issues included the Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aid Act, the advancement and passage of the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Act, student loan forgiveness, telehealth, Medicare and private payer advocacy, and many others. With one more year ahead in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, we will remain active in advocacy efforts on many fronts.



## ACADEMY ADVOCACY ★ INFORMATION ★

Learn more about the Academy's advocacy efforts through the following resources:

- Academy's Government Relations and Reimbursement News web pages
- "Advocacy Roundup" legislative summaries on the Government Relations News web page
- Legislative Action Center
- *Audiology Weekly* E-Newsletter
- Grassroots Advocacy Network (sign up today!)
- *Audiology Today* articles
- Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Text messages on the latest audiology breaking news. Opt-in by texting "Advocacy" to 797979. Msg&data rates may apply. To unsubscribe from this list reply 'STOP' to 797979.

# Legislative Activities

- Attended congressional meetings, co-hosted a congressional briefing, prepared advocacy materials and resources, and engaged audiologists through action alerts to push for the reauthorization of the EHDI Act. This legislation was passed and signed into law in October.
- Submitted testimony urging Congress to increase funding for the NIH.
- Mobilized the Academy's Legislative Action Center to engage audiologists in contacting their members of Congress on a variety of topics.
- Immediately responded to potential concerns about the outsourcing of audiology from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), working closely with members of the House and Senate Veterans Committees and educating them about the importance of audiology to veterans' health.
- Developed issue briefs and supporting materials.
- Issued letter of support for H.R. 2042, the Access to Frontline Health Care Act of 2017.
- Issued letter of support for H.R. 2550, the Medicare Telehealth Parity Act.
- Worked with Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) to introduce a resolution recognizing October as National Audiology Awareness Month.
- Issued an action alert to membership during the congressional tax reform debate regarding a provision that would treat a tuition waiver as taxable income.

# OTC Hearing Aid Legislative and Regulatory Activities

- Academy staff and volunteer leaders engaged with congressional representatives regarding the OTC Hearing Aid Act of 2017, providing education on important ideas to consider as the legislation was crafted before reintroduction in the 115th Congress. The Academy's suggestions directly resulted in stronger labeling requirements being inserted into the bill.
- Met with congressional offices regularly to emphasize the importance of the professional in the delivery of hearing health care and the role of the audiologist beyond the hearing aid device.
- Released issue statements on OTC hearing aid devices and accessibility and affordability of hearing care for adult consumers.
- Participated in a panel as part of the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) roundtable "Now Hear This: Competition, Innovation, and Consumer Protection Issues in Hearing Health Care."
- Submitted comments to the FTC on hearing health care.
- Provided members with updates on OTC legislation via live presentations, e-bulletins, articles, and web postings.
- Academy Board Members met with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to offer the audiologist's perspective on OTC devices in advance of the formal rulemaking process.
- Preparing guides for consumers and audiologists for OTC devices (forthcoming).

## ★ DID YOU KNOW? ★

PAC contributions to the DCCC and NRCC allowed Academy staff to attend over a dozen separate events and political updates featuring key legislators, congressional staffers, and political leaders of both parties, including a dinner featuring President Trump.

# Coding and Reimbursement Activities

## CMS Advocacy

- Submitted response to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Innovation Center's Request for Information (RFI) to support audiology inclusion in the future direction of the Innovation Center.
- Submitted comments on behalf of audiology relative to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS), Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS), and Quality Payment Program (QPP) proposed rules for CY 2018.
- Prepared analysis and educational documents detailing the final rule changes to the MPFS, OPPS, and QPP.
- Nominated an Academy leader who was selected for a CMS Clinical Subcommittee.
- Intervened with Medicare contractors on behalf of audiologists with regard to problems with ICD-10 coding and reimbursement issues (ongoing).

## Private Payer Advocacy

- Convened a meeting to connect Academy leaders and private payer representatives.
- Addressed problematic payer policies and intervened on behalf of Academy members when payer issues were identified.

## Other

- Monitored ICD-10 coding changes and provided member education related to these changes, including an editable superbill template.
- Updated members on new Medicare cards.
- Provided member education and resource documents on transition from PQRS to the Quality Payment Program (QPP).
- Represented the profession at AMA RUC and CPT Editorial Panel meetings throughout the year.

## ★ DID YOU KNOW? ★

Academy staff and volunteers reviewed 10,000 pages of regulations in 2017 to understand and respond to regulatory proposals that may impact the profession.

# Regulatory Activities

- Filed comments in support of a proposed rulemaking issued by the VA that would allow for VA health-care providers to supersede state licensing laws and provide telehealth to their patients regardless of the state in which the patient resides (October).
- Commented on the Healthy People 2030 Draft Framework and communicated updates on the Healthy People initiative to Academy members. The Academy continues to stay engaged on this issue (June, September).
- Nominated an Academy leader to serve on the FDA Ear, Nose, and Throat Devices Panel.
- Monitored the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for anticipated rulemaking related to captioned telephones. (Ongoing, anticipated rulemaking December 2017).

## PAC Activities

- Contributed \$19,000 to political parties and candidates in the 2017 calendar year.
- Contributed \$5,000 to both the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC).
- Made significant early contributions to bipartisan legislators who have championed key Academy initiatives, including Sen. Dean Heller (R-NV), Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA), Rep. Bob Latta (R-OH), Rep. David McKinley (R-WV), Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX), and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA).
- Communicated PAC activities to members through the website and *Audiology Weekly* e-newsletter.

### ★ DIDYOU KNOW? ★

Academy government relations staff met with over 20 congressional offices when potential changes to the VA Choice Health Care program were being discussed.

## State Activities



- Engaged in discussions about the National Council of State Boards of Examiners for Speech–Language Pathology and Audiology (NCSB) initiative to develop an interstate licensure compact for audiology (ongoing).
- Sought recognition of ACAE accreditation by audiology licensure boards (ongoing).
- Represented the Academy at the NCSB annual meeting.
- Promoted audiology at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) annual meeting.
- Opposed CA legislation authorizing hearing aid dispensers to perform cerumen management and tympanometry.
- Tracked state legislative and regulatory changes that could impact the profession (ongoing).

# Member Engagement

## Hill Visits

The Academy hosted Capitol Hill days for the following groups:

- The Academy Board of Directors
- The Student Academy of Audiology Board of Directors
- President Ian Windmill had a one-on-one meeting with National Republican Congressional Committee Chair Steve Stivers (R-OH)
- Nova Southeastern University
- The Ohio State University and the Northeast Ohio AuD Consortium
- Members of Academy leadership, members of the Government Relations Committee, and individual Academy members

## Volunteer Involvement

Look for opportunities in 2018 to get involved with the advocacy volunteer positions.

### Academy Council/Committee Structure

- Advocacy Council
- Government Relations Committee (GRC)
- Coding and Reimbursement Committee (CRC)
- Practice Policy Advisory Council (PPAC)
- PAC Advisory Board
- State Relations Committee (SRC)

### Grassroots Advocacy Network

The Academy launched its Grassroots Advocacy Network in August 2017. The Network serves as a ready resource of volunteers to assist the GRC and the PAC Advisory Board in promoting the organization's policy agenda on behalf of the profession. Since launching the network, the Academy has shared targeted legislative alerts with the group. The Academy is committed to growing the Grassroots Advocacy Network in the coming year and encourages all members interested in advocacy to register online.

### State Fair

The Academy hosted its second annual State Fair at AudiologyNOW! 2017. Steadily increasing in participation by states (18 in 2017), the State Fair is a great opportunity for state leaders to network with audiologists in their own and other states.

## Academy Collaborations

The Academy seeks opportunities to work with many different stakeholders to advance its advocacy efforts.

- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders (NIDCD)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA) (including professional groups and consumer groups like the HLAA, AG Bell, American Cochlear Implant Alliance, and others)
- Audiology Quality Consortium (AQC) (to address quality reporting and the transition from the Physician Quality Reporting System [PQRS] to the Quality Payment Program [QPP])
- Professional organizations representing audiology and/or hearing health interests (AAO-HNS, ADA, ASHA, AVAA, HIA, IHS, and many more)
- Patients' Access to Responsible Care Alliance (PARCA)
- Coalition for Patient's Rights (CPR)
- Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus (FCHHC), including an educational briefing and tour of the NIDCD/NIH Clinical Center and an EHDI briefing

## ★ DID YOU KNOW? ★

The Academy staff and volunteers routinely attend congressional hearings and closed-door briefings featuring key legislators and their staff members to gain insights on political trends and likely legislative initiatives.