

## Report to Section on Emergency Medicine on 2009 AAP Legislative Conference

By Anne Brayer, MD

I attended the 2009 AAP Legislative Conference in Washington D.C on a scholarship from the SOEM. The conference was held from April 19-21 at the Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City. This year was the 20<sup>th</sup> annual legislative conference, and was held at an exciting time in Washington. The Congress had just returned from a break and was due to start working on healthcare reform. It is thought that the time is perhaps more ripe than ever for the government to develop and enact meaningful reform to our very broken healthcare system. The conference was attended by 140 pediatricians from around the US. Most were general pediatricians; many pediatric residents also attended.

The first day of the conference, there was a nice review of the legislative process, and of the status of current healthcare policy. The Chairs of AAP Committees on Federal and State Governmental Affairs each spoke and the AAP position on healthcare reform was broken down and discussed. In the afternoon there were a series of workshops addressing the nuts and bolts of advocacy. That evening, we heard from the Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline* about her views of the current Washington climate and hope for reform.

The second day, in addition to more didactic presentations, we had a number of practice sessions to prepare us for speaking to our Congressional representatives on the final day, and more general media and public speaking pointers. The lunch speaker was Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC), who gave a terrific talk that was both informative and entertaining. On the final day, we met in the Capitol to hear Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) speak, and then went off individually to meet with our Senators' and Representatives' staffs. I was able to meet with other conference attendees from New York with staff representatives of both NY Senators, and individually with my Congresswoman. After all the information and practice provided at the conference, I felt prepared for these meetings, and felt I was able to provide a useful viewpoint for the legislators for the specific healthcare needs of US children.

Overall, I came away from the conference with a much clearer understanding of the current status of our healthcare system, and legislative process necessary to enact reform. I also feel more prepared to deal with media and government officials in general. I'm educated and motivated to advocate for reform in my area of particular interest, injuries in childhood. I highly recommend the conference to anyone with an interest in advocacy. It is time well spent, and my expectation is that it will be widely applicable.