

## **2007 Legislative Conference Summary:**

As a member of the Section of Emergency Medicine, I have spent the last several years eyeing the annual advocacy scholarship awarded to two meriting individuals. This year I finally got my act together and applied for the scholarship, and was only pleasantly surprised to see that I had won the award. Several months passed, and when I found myself on the flight to Washington DC, I have to confess that I still didn't quite know what to expect.

My experience with advocacy thus far was deleting emails sent to me from my Division Head and AAP staff about EMSC related issues. I knew that I was supposed to write someone in government about the funding needs for our specialty, but I considered myself lucky enough just to know who the senator from Illinois was and that he was running for president.

You would have never thought that my advocacy knowledge was as limited as it was. After all, I co-chair the Committee for the Future of our section, and actually took a health policy class at the Kellogg School of Management. To all outward appearances, I should have been an expert in advocacy.

However, sitting in an auditorium filled with eager pediatricians, I quickly began to realize that I was quite a novice at legislative issues. In fact, I pretty much had figured out what EMSC stood for, but SCHIP was an enigma to me. Oh, I knew that most kids we see in our Emergency Department were insured by Medicaid, but if you had asked me to differentiate between Medicaid recipients and the SCHIP, I wouldn't have come up with much.

The legislative conference changed all that for me though. After two days in Washington DC with some very expert AAP staff and special keynote speakers, I not only understand the intricacies of SCHIP, but can also brag that I have been to the hill to lobby on behalf of an issue that directly impacts the health care of children as well as the future of our specialty.

The workshops offered at the legislative conference were beyond helpful. They actually simulated sessions with state representatives, and the highlight was no doubt the Monday afternoon Mock session where each group of individuals assumes the role of a newly elected member of the US House of Representatives.

An added bonus at this year's conference was the showing of a movie written by a general pediatrician, Dr. Olson Huff. The movie, entitled "Simple Things", is the story of a pediatrician who left a busy academic Chicago practice to care for the health care needs of a community of folks in North Carolina. Believe me, I was inspired almost enough to sit down with my division head upon my return to Chicago and express my desire to go to the mountains myself. But to actually meet Dr.Huff and the group of actors and producers who put this movie on was a special treat.

All in all, the legislative conference this year was a huge success. If you are relatively new to the advocacy scene, I would highly recommend your attending next year. The presentations are actually available on the “members only” AAP.ORG website under the advocacy/federal affairs section. It would be worth your while to browse through some of the talks. And then there’s always our section’s legislative scholarship to help cover the cost if you are a relatively junior faculty!

Thank you so much for giving me the privilege to attend the conference this year. I hope to serve you better as co-chair of the committee for the future because of the added skills I acquired at the conference.

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