

The Professional Advocacy Conference was held in DC on April 5-6 and was chaired by Dr. Dale Anne Featheringham, Trustee At-large. There were 45 orthodontists and 25 residents in attendance. Attendees learned a lot about the political landscape, our advocacy efforts and how to advocate to members of Congress. Mr. Rajesh Nayak, Assistant Secretary for Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor spoke to us about labor shortage issues. Some members of Congress addressed the group over the 2 days and joined us for a reception and dinner. The Capital had just started to allow outside people into the Capital so we were able to have some in-person meetings. The planned trip to the Vietnam Wall Memorial was cancelled due to weather but the founder of this treasured memorial, Mr. Jan C. Scruggs, gave a talk to us at dinner about the history of the wall. An AAO delegation met with the Canadian Embassy to advocate on behalf of our Canadian members. Dr. Remington Richardson, an orthodontic resident at Indiana University, led a new event this year, round table discussions with residents regarding future AAO advocacy. The Professional Advocacy Conference highlights the efforts by the AAO, our lobbying firm and the AAO Advocacy Team.

The Component Legal Support Fund, set at \$1 million by the House of Delegates in 2015, has been used by over half of all state components to help with state advocacy issues. State issues relating to teledentistry, consumer protection and labor shortages are the current top issues. The AAO Advocacy Team is currently working in 22 states. Any state component may apply for the use the CLS funds.

A COGA/PAC Task Force was charged “to review COGA and PAC from a cost-benefit perspective and recommend to the Board any fundamental changes deemed necessary (including potential sunset of COGA and/or PAC) and even possible creation of a new entity to address advocacy needs of our members.” COGA and PAC will attend a joint meeting in October to start to implement recommendations of the task force.

Hopefully you participated in the Member Policy Survey which was sent to AAO members. We asked about direct to consumer related issues and asked members to rank policy priorities. The top three ranked policy priorities were direct to consumer regulations, workforce related issues and small business-related issues.

Thank you for allowing me to participate on this council.

Yours,

Valerie Martone