

Orthodontists who are not engaged with their constituents or the AAO sometimes feel that there is a disconnect between "THE AAO" and what the members desire. In actuality, constituents and their parent organization, the AAO, are member driven. We, the members, decide what is best for our organization of orthodontists. So, it is frustrating for me to hear "Why doesn't or why isn't the AAO do/doing _____" when that orthodontist is just not aware of what is happening in their organization and instead of seeking to understand, only judges what has been done. As I reflect on the almost 10 years of working with the GLAO and the AAO in various roles, I have a fair understanding of how things work in these two organizations. My first thought for this article was to explain how a GLAO member's idea travels from inspiration to implementation, but I found that four long paragraphs later I was still not finished. You will be thankful that I changed gears and did not subject you to that very lengthy explanation. Instead, I would like to explain the depth of work that goes into making decisions for our members.

The AAO House of Delegates (HOD) is the governing body of the AAO and meets at least annually. There are a total of 64 delegates that vote on resolutions, which are carefully worded, scrutinized and amended. The proportion of delegates for each constituent is determined on the number of members in each constituency. Basically, what the HOD decides is the way things go in the AAO. The Board of Trustees is tasked to make sure that happens and to make decisions and recommendations as needed in between meetings of the House of Delegates. What every member needs to know is that every new or old idea, called resolutions, goes through tremendous scrutiny. Evidence and expert opinions from Councils, Task Forces, AAO staff or experts are presented. The legal aspects are reviewed. Each constituent weighs in on their recommendations regarding the resolutions. Constituents talk to each other and look for support on how they think the resolution should be accepted, modified or rejected. Any AAO member can come to the reference committees in person or online and say what they think about a resolution before any vote takes place in the HOD. Resolutions are encouraged to be presented early enough so that the constituents and members can review them and give their advice to their delegates before the HOD. Each resolution is reviewed by hundreds of orthodontists before a decision is made. The HOD is the we in the AAO, not some nebulous entity which is out of touch with its members.

Each constituent is represented on every AAO Council, most Task Forces and committees. These members go back to their constituents and report back on the developments of these entities. The GLAO encourages participation and puts out notices and requests for members to apply for positions as a delegate or council member or Trustee. In the GLAO, delegates and Trustees are elected by the GLAO membership. Council members are elected by the Board of Directors which is composed of the officers and the directors from each state of the GLAO region. To encourage member participation, the GLAO hosts coffee chats 3-4 time a year to allow for members input and suggestions to take back to the GLAO Board. If you really are interested in the direction of the AAO, apply to the GLAO and be part of the decision-making process.

There are many ways to engage in our organizations, make your voice heard and feel part of your professional organization. Go to the GLAO or AAO websites for more information, reach out to GLAO officers and delegates, go to GLAO meetings and seek out active members, introduce yourself to AAO officers, go to the AAO meetings and introduce yourself to delegates, officers, and anyone else you can

think of. They are orthodontists just like you who care about the profession of orthodontists and their colleagues. You have more in common with them than you think. We, as leaders, know that we will need to be replaced at some point to keep moving into the future for our profession. Give us the honor of passing the baton to you, the next leaders of our organization.

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