



**AAOPAC Report
Dr. Scott Schulz**

September, 2026

AAOPAC Race to 10

Join the race! The AAOPAC Board *Race to 10* challenges each Constituent Region to achieve at least 10%-member participation in AAOPAC giving between June 1 and December 1. Participation is the key, give what you can. The focus is on broad engagement and collective impact. Every member has a role to play in advancing the specialty and protecting patient access to quality care. It's a friendly competition, let's make the GLAO come out on top! Winners will be recognized by the AAO (including bragging rights and a traveling trophy for the winning Constituent Region). Let's go GLAO!

The AAOPAC had a very good fiscal year which concluded on June 1. AAOPAC raised \$467,024, surpassing its \$460,000 fundraising goal and finishing Fiscal Year 2025–2026 at 102% of goal. AAOPAC concluded the fiscal year with 844 contributors, a 1% increase over FY2024–2025. The GLAO led the charge with an **8.1% participation rate**.

Here is how the constituent participation broke down: AAOPAC Fiscal Year 2025-26: GLAO – 8.1%, SAO – 7.6% , MASO – 7.2%, MSO – 5.9% , RMSO – 5.6% SWSO – 4.9% PCSO – 3.9% , NESO – 3.7%

Our businesses and professional lives are influenced by federal laws and regulations. Your PAC contributions help to give us access to the hearts and minds of legislators, of both political parties, who create those laws and oversee the regulators. We need to show a consistent and significant participation rate to our PAC to influence legislation to protect our patients and practices.

Don't wait to give! The race for this fiscal year's 10% goal ends on December 1. If you have contributed to the PAC please continue to do so, and reach out to your colleagues to contribute, at any level. I hope we all rise to meet the challenge and make our voices heard. I am extremely thankful for our advocacy team at AAO headquarters. They have done a great job of making our presence known in Washington and at the state and provincial level.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Scott O. Schulz

GLAO Representative to AAOPAC

AAOPAC and ADVOCACY

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AAOPAC Fiscal Year 2025-26 Dashboard GLAO – 8.1% SAO – 7.6% MASO – 7.2% MSO – 5.9% RMSO – 5.6% SWSO – 4.9% PCSO – 3.9% NESO – 3.7%

GLAO, MASO, MSO, PCSO, and SWSO achieved 100% participation in the Fourth Annual AAOPAC House of Delegates Challenge among eligible delegates contributing \$500 or more to AAOPAC (or AAO Foundation for Canadian members. The AAOPAC Lounge at the 2026 AAO Annual Session in Orlando continued to engage members through advocacy programming, recognition of AAO members serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Kentucky Derby celebration, and opportunities to learn about AAOPAC and grassroots advocacy.

Advocacy Communications

The AAO expanded advocacy communications through print and digital publications, social media, member storytelling, and online resources to keep members, policymakers, and stakeholders informed of key advocacy initiatives. The AAO weekly eBulletin, Orthodontic Advocate and Practice Management Bulletin highlighted federal and state legislative successes, student loan initiatives, grassroots advocacy, AAOPAC accomplishments, and policy developments affecting orthodontic practice. AAOinfo.org/StudentDebt continued serving as a central resource for federal student loan updates, repayment information, advocacy efforts, and educational materials.

The AAO will continue engaging with lawmakers and federal agencies as federal student loan reforms are implemented, advocating for policies that address the challenges facing future orthodontists and specialty education. Federal priorities will include advancing the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), responsible artificial intelligence policies, patient health and safety, small business support, and expanded access to quality orthodontic care. At the state and provincial level, the AAO will continue partnering with Constituent Regions and Components to implement newly enacted legislation, defend specialty advertising patient safety protections, advance workforce solutions, and support responsible teledentistry policies. The National Advocacy Network, Council on Government Advocacy, and AAOPAC Board will continue expanding grassroots engagement and guiding the AAO's evidence-based advocacy priorities.

Federal Advocacy

Fiscal Year 2025–2026 included a wide range of priorities for federal advocacy, advancing policies that protect patients, strengthening the orthodontic specialty, and supporting orthodontic practices through engagement with Congress, Federal agencies, and the Organized Dentistry Coalition. The AAO introduced its AI position paper to key policymakers for responsible use of AI.

The 2026 AAO Professional Advocacy Conference brought a maximum capacity group of AAO members and more than 40 orthodontic residents to Washington, D.C., where participants conducted 60+ meetings with Members of Congress and Congressional staff to advocate for patient safety, responsible artificial intelligence, student loan reform, the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), and small business priorities. AAO leaders met with officials from the FDA, FTC, SBA,

White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to discuss artificial intelligence, patient safety, HIPAA cybersecurity, and regulatory issues affecting orthodontic practices and patients. AAOPAC hosted a bipartisan Capitol Hill reception attended by 26 U.S. Representatives and 2 U.S. Senators, providing AAO members additional opportunities to strengthen relationships with federal policymakers. Student Loan & Small Business Advocacy.

Working with coalition partners, the AAO also successfully defended PassThrough Entity Tax (PTET) protections benefiting orthodontic practices and other small businesses. Advancing Patient Health & Safety. The AAO continued engagement with the FDA on direct-to-consumer orthodontic treatment, Class II medical device oversight, and responsible use of artificial intelligence, while distributing its Artificial Intelligence Position Paper to federal policymakers. The AAO also met with HHS Office for Civil Rights to provide feedback on proposed HIPAA cybersecurity requirements affecting small healthcare practices.

Building relationships with policymakers throughout the year, AAO leaders strengthened relationships with Members of Congress, federal agencies, governors, state legislators, and healthcare policymakers through advocacy meetings, national policy conferences, and political events, further expanding the AAO's federal advocacy influence and relationship.

AAOPAC Leaders

Dr. Edward Davis had a successful first year as AAOPAC Chair, and he will continue as AAOPAC Chair for FY2026-27. Dr. Steve Robirds will continue his role as the AAOPAC BOT Liaison. Thank you to Dr. Erik Klintmalm (CONYM Liaison) and Dr. Phillip Beckwith (GLAO) for their fundraising leadership on the AAOPAC Board and we wish them well as they transition off the Board. Congratulations to Dr. Valerie Martone (GLAO) for serving two consecutive years as Chair of the Council on Government Advocacy (COGA) with tremendous success and leadership. Welcome to Dr. Melissa Bernhardt as the newly elected Chair and Dr. Kelly Giannetti in the freshly created Vice-Chair position, both serving for FY2026-27. Thank you to Dr. Ryan Frost (BOT Liaison) and Dr. Jenna Schneider (CONYM Liaison) for their COGA service as they transition off the Council.

Contact us: advocacy@aaortho.org

Find & share facts! OrthoFacts.org

State and Provincial Advocacy

PATIENT HEALTH & SAFETY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALTY
ADVERTISING & REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Senate Bill 453, requiring an in-person examination and review of current radiographs before orthodontic treatment, was signed into law, making South Carolina the 9th state to enact AAO-supported patient safety protections. The AAO continues supporting implementation.

TEXAS: Supported implementation of the state's clear aligner law and strengthened Texas State Board of Dental Examiners' rules by emphasizing the standard of care and technical documentation requirements.

UTAH: Continued implementation of House Bill 372, preserving the in-person examination requirement while expanding workforce opportunities through additional dental assistant training and certification.

ILLINOIS: Supported implementation of the AAO-backed teledentistry law while preserving the in-person examination requirement.

GEORGIA: Monitored implementation of Georgia ' s teledentistry law to preserve the in-person examination requirement.

CALIFORNIA: Advanced workforce initiatives, supported preservation of Medi-Cal dental funding, and engaged lawmakers on artificial intelligence legislation.

MARYLAND: Supported implementation of expanded function dental assistant legislation while advocating for practical training requirements.

ONTARIO: Continued advocating for expanded orthodontic duties for Level II dental assistants under direct supervision.

OREGON: Worked with the Oregon State Society of Orthodontists to improve Expanded Function Orthodontic Dental Assistant (EFODA) implementation and certification pathways.

MICHIGAN: Supported specialty advertising legislation while monitoring updates to the Dental Practice Act.

OHIO: Defended specialty advertising protections and participated in the 3rd annual Ohio Lobby Day.

WISCONSIN: Supported existing specialty advertising protections before the Dentistry Examining Board.

MONTANA: Monitored licensing reform and specialty advertising discussions before the Dental Board.

ALASKA: Monitored dental loss ratio legislation in partnership with the Alaska Dental Society.

COLORADO: Successfully incorporated AAO recommendations into proposed teledentistry regulations, including specialty advertising provisions.

FLORIDA: Supported continued funding of the \$6 million FRAME dental student loan repayment program and implementation of AAO-backed teledentistry legislation.

NEVADA: Strengthened proposed teledentistry regulations to preserve meaningful in-person patient care.

ORTHO Act: Landmark Federal legislation builds on years of successful AAO advocacy to advance patient health and safety standards for teledentistry.

A major AAO advocacy priority has reached Congress with the introduction of the [Oversight of Responsible Teledentistry for Healthy Outcomes \(ORTHO\) Act \(H.R. 9829\)](#).

Introduced on July 23, 2026, by Congressman Brian Babin, DDS (R-Texas), the AAO-supported legislation would establish baseline federal patient health and safety standards for orthodontic treatment delivered through teledentistry while preserving appropriate access to virtual care.

The bill represents an important milestone in AAO's longstanding work to ensure that new technologies and treatment models evolve in ways that protect patients and maintain professional accountability. Developed with the support of the AAO, the ORTHO Act reflects years of collaboration among AAO volunteer leaders, members, advocacy staff, and congressional champions.

“Teledentistry and artificial intelligence are transforming the delivery of health care and can expand access to care when deployed in ways that preserve patient safety and professional accountability,” said **AAO President Dr. Mike Durbin**. “By providing a clear framework for the responsible use of teledentistry, the legislation promotes responsible innovation while helping protect patients nationwide.”

AAO Vice President of Advocacy **Nathan Mick** added, “Introduction of the ORTHO Act represents an important first step in the legislative process. While much work remains, this milestone demonstrates that AAO is helping shape public policy rather than simply responding to it.”

The ORTHO Act would:

Require an in-person dental examination before most dental treatment is provided through teledentistry;

- Allow appropriate exceptions for emergencies, public health programs, and initial orthodontic screenings;
- Require in-person confirmation and review of appropriate diagnostic records, including X-rays, before orthodontic treatment begins; and
- Authorize enforcement by the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general.

Congressman Babin, who practiced dentistry for more than four decades, emphasized that the legislation is intended to balance access and innovation with appropriate clinical safeguards.

“Patients deserve the confidence of knowing their treatment decisions are based on an in-person evaluation, appropriate diagnostic records, and sound clinical judgment—not solely on an online interaction,” **Congressman Babin** said. “The ORTHO Act strikes the right balance by preserving access to teledentistry while ensuring commonsense safeguards are in place to protect patients.”

Building on a Decade of AAO Advocacy

The ORTHO Act represents the latest milestone in nearly a decade of AAO efforts to strengthen oversight of direct-to-consumer orthodontics and promote the responsible use of teledentistry. Working alongside AAO members, state dental associations, AAO Component and Constituent organizations, and policymakers and regulators, the AAO has pursued patient protections through multiple avenues.

Examples of this work include:

- **Elevating concerns before state regulators.** Beginning as early as 2017, the AAO and members submitted complaints and comments to state dental boards regarding direct-to-consumer orthodontic models and the importance of applying existing standards governing the practice of dentistry.
- **Defending state oversight authority.** The AAO supported state dental boards facing legal challenges to their regulation of direct-to-consumer orthodontic companies. In 2019, a federal court dismissed the majority of SmileDirectClub’s claims challenging the Alabama Board of Dental Examiners, and upheld the Board’s authority to regulate digital dental scans **under Alabama law**.

- **Pressing for greater federal oversight.** The AAO worked with a bipartisan group of 21 members of Congress to request a Government Accountability Office review of federal oversight of direct-to-consumer advertising for medical devices. The AAO was subsequently selected as one of 11 stakeholder groups interviewed for the report submitted to Congress in 2023.
- **Bringing patient-safety concerns directly to federal agencies.** In response to an FDA request for information on at-home medical technologies, the AAO highlighted the risks of orthodontic treatment provided without direct doctor-patient interaction, an in-person examination or appropriate diagnostic records.
- **Challenging practices that limited patients' voices.** The AAO **also advocated** for greater transparency regarding SmileDirectClub's use of restrictive nondisclosure agreements. A 2023 settlement with the District of Columbia attorney general required the company to release more than 17,000 consumers nationwide from provisions that prevented them from publicly discussing their experiences.
- **Educating patients and gathering evidence.** Through OrthoFacts.org, consumer alerts, member surveys and its *Prior Mail-Order Orthodontic Customer Form*, the AAO has helped patients understand potential risks while collecting information to support advocacy and regulatory engagement.

Together, these efforts laid the groundwork for state-level progress and the introduction of a federal framework through the ORTHO Act

Bringing State-Level Progress to Congress

The ORTHO Act takes patient health and safety protections successfully advanced through AAO advocacy in individual states to the federal level. Nevada became the first state to enact an AAO-supported in-person examination requirement in 2023. Florida and Illinois followed in 2024, with the AAO and its state partners helping advance legislation requiring an in-person examination and review of diagnostic records before teeth are moved.

Momentum accelerated in 2025, when Utah, West Virginia, Georgia, Oklahoma and Texas enacted similar patient protections. In May 2026, [South Carolina became the ninth state](#) to require an in-person examination before orthodontic treatment following six years of sustained advocacy by the AAO, the South Carolina Association of Orthodontists, the South Carolina Dental Association and AAO members.

The AAO's work continues after legislation is signed. The Advocacy team and AAO grassroots leaders remain engaged with state dental boards during the rulemaking and implementation process to help ensure new laws are enforced as intended and do not contain loopholes that could weaken patient protections.

The introduction of the ORTHO Act now provides an opportunity to build on this bipartisan state momentum by advancing consistent patient safety principles nationwide.

Ask Congress to Support the ORTHO Act

Introduction is only the first step in the federal legislative process. AAO members are encouraged to contact their representatives and ask them to support the ORTHO Act. Member advocacy will be critical to building bipartisan support and moving the legislation forward in Congress.

Take Action: Ask Your Representative to Support the ORTHO Act

AAOPAC is the only political action committee dedicated exclusively to representing orthodontists and their patients. Through its bipartisan approach, AAOPAC builds and strengthens relationships with Congressional champions who understand the AAO's priorities and can help introduce, support and advance legislation such as the ORTHO Act. Members contributing \$250 or more will receive an invitation this October to join the AAO in Washington, D.C., for the Professional Advocacy Conference, March 8–9, 2027, where they can advocate directly for AAO policy priorities, including the ORTHO Act, in the 120th Congress.