



SurgeonsVoice Advocacy Guide:

Tools and Resources to Become an Effective Surgeon Advocate



American College of Surgeons Professional Association



American College of Surgeons Professional Association Political Action Committee

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Dear Advocate,

Policy decisions can have a profound impact on surgeons and surgical patients. While some of these decisions are promising and desirable, others create barriers that make it difficult for surgeons to practice and provide affordable, quality care. The College continues to propose meaningful solutions for policymakers to consider, working to achieve the best possible outcome.

Successful advocacy starts with common goals, strength in numbers, and opportunities to engage elected officials and decision makers. The American College of Surgeons (ACS) advocates with, and on behalf of, surgeons, patients, and the surgical profession at the federal and state levels. With more than 85,000 members, the College has the potential to make a strong impact at all levels of government while advocating for a better future for surgeons and patients.

Because the ACS represents several surgical specialties, its members bring a unique perspective, level of expertise, and voice to the public policy process. ACS members' in-depth knowledge of surgery, particularly a surgeon's role within his or her community, helps leverage important advocacy priorities.

The purpose of this Advocacy Guide is to help all College members become more effective and informed surgeon advocates. It includes information on the College's advocacy structure and activities, the legislative process, and tips for building relationships with members of Congress and their staff.

You are your best advocate. Establishing yourself as a surgeon advocate is critical to making your voice heard.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Timmerman, MD, FACS

Chair, Health Policy and Advocacy Group (HPAG)

James W. Gigantelli, MD, FACS

Chair, Legislative Committee

Linda M. Barney, MD, FACS

Chair, General Surgery Coding and Reimbursement Committee (GSCRC)

Ross F. Goldberg, MD, FACS

Chair, Health Policy Advisory Council (HPAC)

William G. Cioffi, MD, FACS

Chair, ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC Board of Directors



ADVOCACY 101

Every day decisions are being made in Washington, DC, and around the country that have the potential to directly affect our practice environments and the patients we treat. Because surgeons believe responsibility to our patients extends beyond the operating room, advocacy and health policy continues to remain a top priority of the American College of Surgeons (ACS).

OVERVIEW

In 2001, the ACS Board of Governors voted unanimously to establish a 501c(6) affiliated corporation, the American College of Surgeons Professional Association (ACSPA), to offer a broader range of activities and services benefitting surgeons and patients, including an expanded legislative advocacy program featuring a political action committee (PAC). The formation of the 501c(6) ensures that the College can continue to maintain the standard-setting educational activities that remain at the core of its mission. Fellows hold a seamless membership to both the ACS and ACSPA.

ACS' ROLE

ACS goals include improving surgical patient care and safeguarding standards of that care within an ethical practice environment for our profession. Even in the current challenging political climate, the College must continue to play a proactive role in meaningful health policy proposals for Congress and state legislatures to consider. It is up to surgeon advocates to become experts within this space and help advocate for meaningful, practical policies at the federal and state levels.

The ACS Division of Advocacy and Health Policy (DAHP) exists to help advance the College's health policy agenda through Congress via lobbying activities, grassroots (*SurgeonsVoice*) efforts, and political affairs (*SurgeonsPAC*). To help develop and advocate for health care policy that is in the best interest of patients and physicians, the DAHP Washington office liaises with federal and government entities—including Congress, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and Health and Human Services (HHS)—on a variety of issues of importance to the surgical profession.

All surgeons should become more engaged in advocacy.

YOUR ROLE

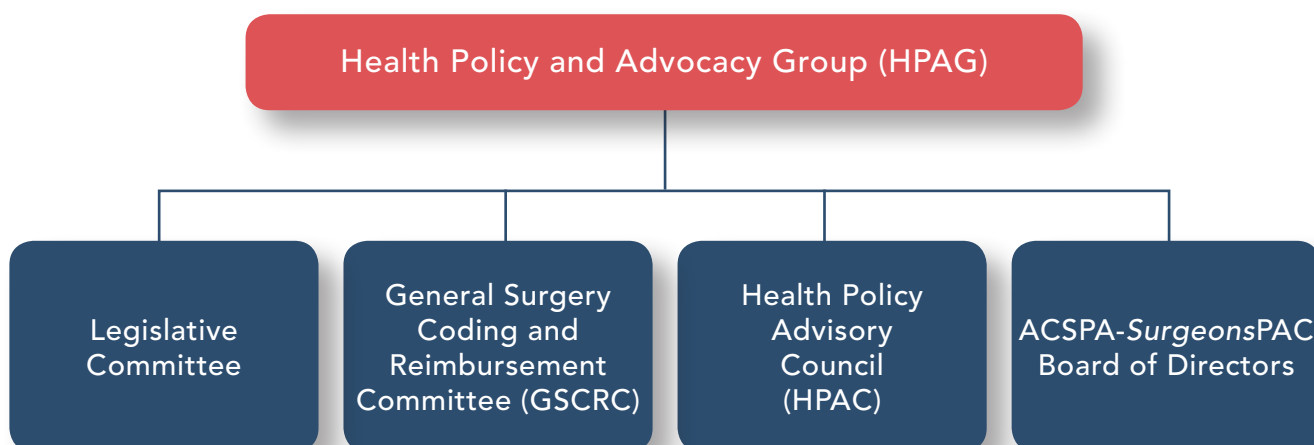
Establishing yourself as a surgeon advocate is crucial to making your voice heard. More specifically, regularly engaging with members of Congress and their staff, and serving as a trusted resource on issues of importance to surgeons and the surgical patient, is essential. As a surgeon, your first-hand expertise and training provide a realistic perspective on health policy issues that members of Congress often only encounter via budget implications and reticent policy jargon. As a result, many lawmakers, particularly your elected officials, will look to you for guidance on complex issues.

INSIDE THE ACS

ADVOCACY STRUCTURE

Familiarizing yourself with the College's advocacy structure is essential to understanding how ACS determines its advocacy priorities. Under the leadership of the Health Policy and Advocacy Group (HPAG), the Legislative Committee, General Surgery Coding and Reimbursement Committee (GSCRC), Health Policy Advisory Council (HPAC), and the ACSPA-*SurgeonsPAC* Board of Directors all play a unique and vital role to help identify what challenges surgeons are facing around the country.

STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW



HEALTH POLICY AND ADVOCACY GROUP (HPAG)

The Health Policy and Advocacy Group (HPAG) is the executive committee for the DAHP and is responsible for approving the recommendations made by its subcommittees. The HPAG sets the DAHP advocacy agenda and priorities, and aims to ensure that all advocacy related subcommittees are working in coordination with its policy agenda.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Committee's primary responsibility is to analyze legislation and review and provide policy position recommendations to HPAG. Other committee duties include serving as a knowledgeable resource for their colleagues regarding legislative activities that impact surgeons and surgical patients.

GENERAL SURGERY CODING AND REIMBURSEMENT COMMITTEE (GSCRC)

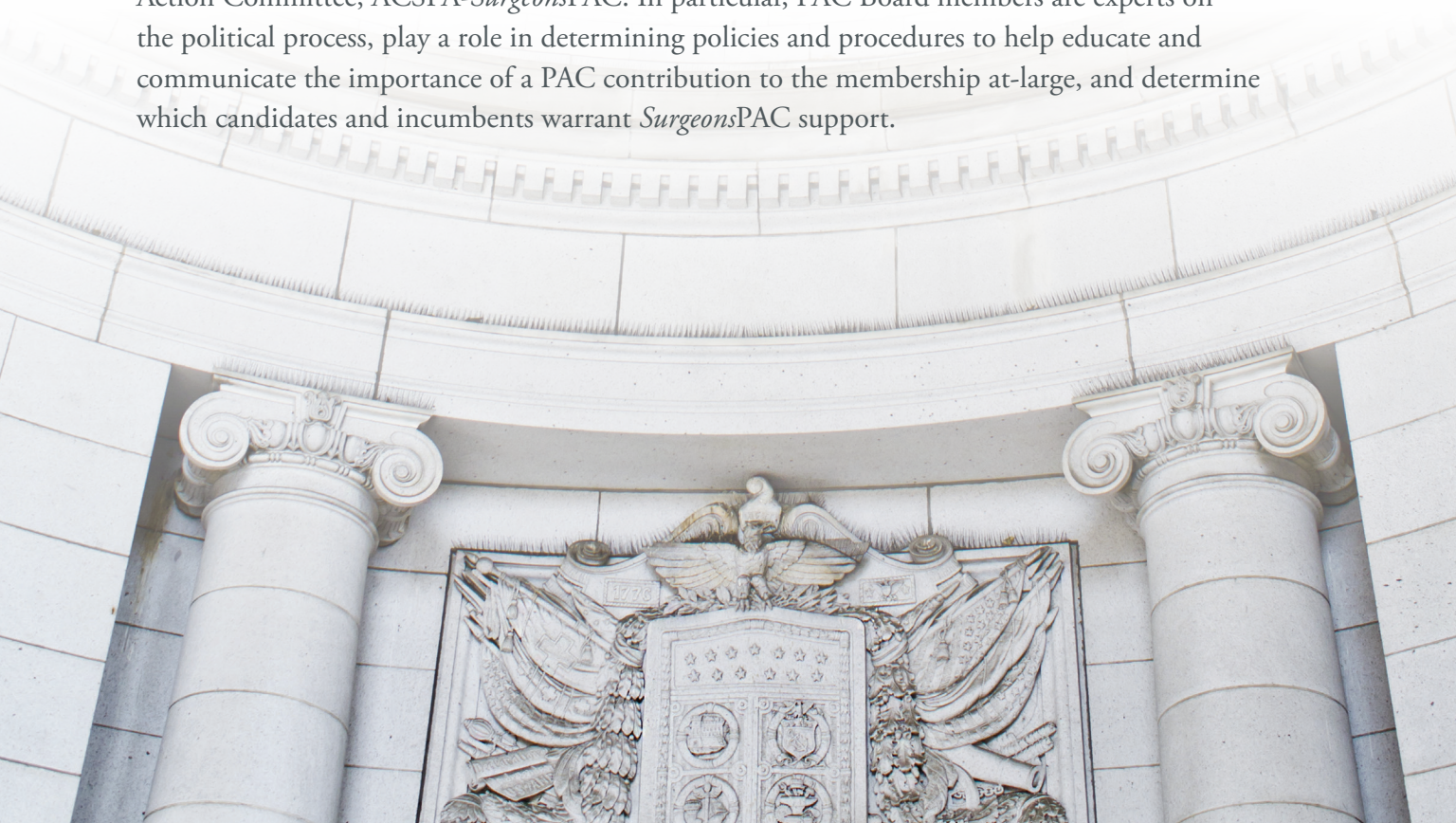
The General Surgery Coding and Reimbursement Committee (GSCRC) represents and acts in the interests of Fellows and their practices regarding issues that impact coding, billing, and reimbursement for surgical care. The GSCRC focuses on activities of the American Medical Association/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) and the Current Procedural Terminology Editorial Panel (CPT), which are responsible for determining payment rates for clinical services. In addition to its RUC and CPT efforts, the GSCRC evaluates a variety of other payment policy issues, including those related to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule and other federal regulations, private payor policies, and practice management processes.

HEALTH POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL (HPAC)

The Health Policy Advisory Council (HPAC) is the grassroots advocacy committee for the College and is based on the theory that “all politics is local.” The goal of the College’s nationwide grassroots advocacy program is to communicate, educate, and provide the necessary tools and resources to build a strong network of surgeon advocates. HPAC members are a diverse group, consisting of Regents, Governors, young surgeons and residents, Health Policy Scholars, and other College members with expressed interest or expertise in health care policy. Special efforts are made to ensure that all specialties have representation within the HPAC.

ACSPA-SURGEONSPAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The *SurgeonsPAC* Board of Directors is responsible for establishing the fundraising activities and disbursement strategies for the American College of Surgeons Professional Association Political Action Committee, *ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC*. In particular, PAC Board members are experts on the political process, play a role in determining policies and procedures to help educate and communicate the importance of a PAC contribution to the membership at-large, and determine which candidates and incumbents warrant *SurgeonsPAC* support.



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

FEDERAL EFFORTS

On a daily basis, both academic and practicing surgeons are affected by **issues** such as reducing administrative burdens and regulations, modifying and implementing Medicare physician payment reform, improving electronic health record and health information technology interoperability, increasing funding for trauma systems and enhancing cancer care, and more. The federal legislative team regularly monitors Congress' agenda to help determine what issues have the potential to impact surgeons and surgical patients.

The **federal legislative team** works on your behalf to advocate, lobby, and promote important issues. DAHP staff frequently lobbies key congressional offices, advocates for numerous House and Senate health care-related bills, and attends hundreds of fundraisers, candidate meetings, and health care industry events annually.

Educating our membership about legislative initiatives and policy positions via ACS publications, press statements, and social media is critical to ensuring Fellows remain engaged and informed.

By **participating** in working groups, testifying before Congress, and coalescing with like-minded physician and patient groups, DAHP helps to ensure that the ACS is a leader and subject matter expert regarding important health policy matters.

LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY SUMMIT

The ACS Leadership and Advocacy Summit, held in Washington, DC, annually, offers attendees an opportunity to become more educated about the College's overarching priorities while receiving extensive advocacy training that can be applied in meetings with lawmakers on Capitol Hill or at home. The Advocacy Summit provides a great venue to network with colleagues, meet face-to-face with key health care policymakers and legislators, and, perhaps most importantly, become the constituents their legislators know and trust to offer advice on surgical issues.



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

STATE ACTIVITIES

The College's **State Affairs** staff monitors the legislative activity of state legislatures around the country to prevent enactment of harmful policies as well as to identify trending issues and strategies that ACS Chapters can apply locally to maximize the impact of their efforts.

Utilizing **state advocacy resources** (facs.org/advocacy/state/resources) provides Fellows with the ability to track bills, review legislative toolkits, write their representatives, develop legislative strategic plans, and more.

Tracking **state legislation** and monitoring potential impacts to surgical practice at the local level is critical. A comprehensive list of bills that ACS staff is currently reviewing is available at facs.org/advocacy/state/legislation.

Established in October 2009, the **Chapter Advocacy Lobby Day Grant Program** supports local advocacy efforts through ACS Chapters in their respective states. Lobby days are a great way to establish and leverage relationships, even if not advocating for a specific bill or issue.

ACS **partnerships** with state specialty societies and other like-minded health organizations help establish strong allies on surgical issues.



ACS Indiana Chapter Lobby Day

REGULATORY EFFORTS

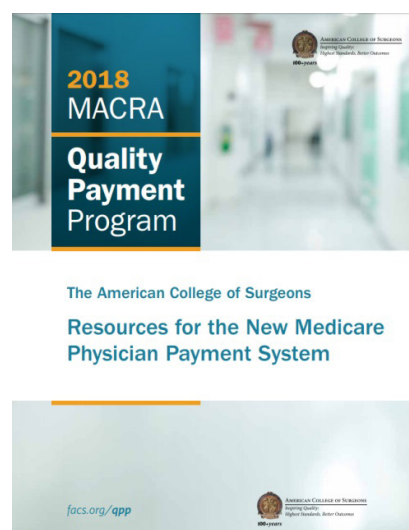
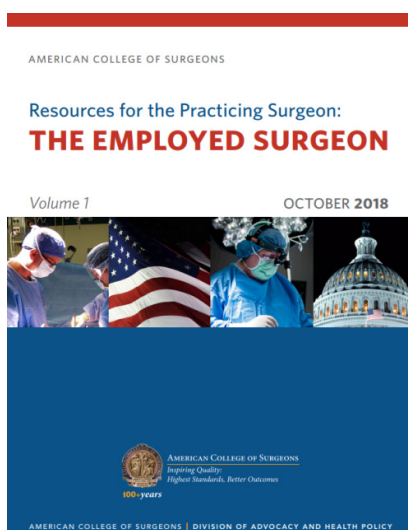
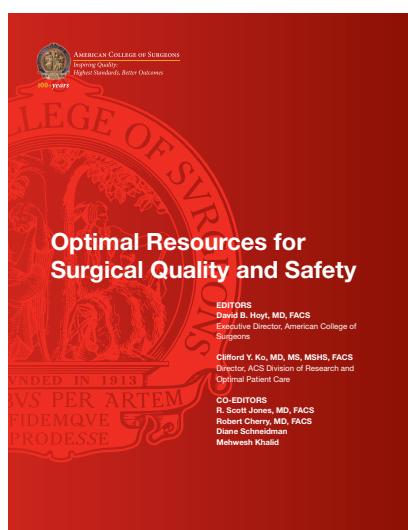
The ACS Regulatory Affairs team analyzes federal policies that affect surgeons and the care they provide to their patients. Much of the DAHP's regulatory activity is focused on physician, hospital, ambulatory surgical center, and other facility reimbursement rules, Medicare payment models and incentive programs, private payor policies, administrative burden reduction, and practice management. Advocating for appropriate quality measurement and reimbursement policies is important to ensure that surgical patients receive high-quality care, as well as to secure proper payment rates for practicing surgeons.

Supporting clinical quality measures that accurately represent the care surgeons provide leads to meaningful quality improvement and fair public reporting.

Evaluating and submitting feedback on regulatory health care proposals released by federal agencies provides the College with an opportunity to highlight policies that may negatively affect surgeons and patients.

Actively participating in regulatory relief efforts enables the ACS to share recommendations on ways to reduce or eliminate administrative burdens and other sources of clinician burnout—such as onerous prior authorization requirements, outdated documentation guidelines, and poor usability of health information technologies—with congressional and executive branch leaders.

The College's educational resources help Fellows navigate the business and administrative aspects of managing a surgical practice.





American College of Surgeons Professional Association

SURGEONVOICE

Through *SurgeonsVoice*, the American College of Surgeons Professional Association's (ACSPA) nationwide, interactive advocacy program, surgeon advocates have the ability to send messages to Congress to strengthen ACS' impact in Washington.

In addition to learning more about grassroots tools and resources available to you via *SurgeonsVoice* online, the following programs and activities can help you become a more engaged, effective surgeon advocate:

Become a surgeon advocate. Resources available at *SurgeonsVoice* online allow surgeons to engage and build valuable relationships with lawmakers, advance policy and legislation favorable to surgeons and surgical patients, and foster champions for such on Capitol Hill.

Become an HPAC Councilor. The Health Policy Advisory Council (HPAC) consists of key surgeon advocates who have developed expertise on legislative, political, and regulatory issues in order to facilitate two-way communication between Fellows and the Division of Advocacy and Health Policy. HPAC Councilors serve as grassroots ambassadors forming an extensive, nationwide grassroots advocacy network.

Take action. Taking action on issues of importance is vital to provide the surgical perspective in Washington. More specifically, regularly engaging with members of Congress and their staff, and serving as a trusted resource on issues of importance to surgeons and surgical patients is an essential part of establishing oneself as a surgeon advocate.

Learn about your legislators. Learning about your representatives or senators backgrounds, key committee assignments, voting history, and relevant leadership roles assists in establishing a level of respect within a congressional office. Regularly visiting members' websites, signing up for e-newsletters or updates, and keeping up with issues they support are great ways to stay informed.

Follow us! Help set the social (media) stage and further engage surgeon advocates in the College's advocacy and health policy activities by tweeting, retweeting, and tagging @SurgeonsVoice in Twitter posts.

A CUT ABOVE THE REST: ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Overview

The Division of Advocacy and Health Policy's (DAHP's) Advocate of the Year recognition program tracks how engaged surgeon advocates utilize tools and take action via *SurgeonsVoice* online. Top advocates establish and maintain relationships with legislators, helping to advance health policy priorities. The Advocate of the Year will be recognized during the annual Clinical Congress, featured in the *Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons*, and invited to participate in other advocacy related activities.

Advocate of the Year criteria can be found at facs.org/-/media/files/advocacy/surgeonsvoice/Advocate_of_the_Year.aspx.

During Clinical Congress 2018, the inaugural *SurgeonsVoice* Advocate of the Year award was presented to Alan G. Thorson, MD, FACS, for his commitment to the College's advocacy and political efforts, particularly through his involvement with the ACS Commission on Cancer. The following runners up were also recognized for outstanding participation: Amanda Arrington, MD, FACS; Annabel Barber, MD, FACS; Amalia Cochran, MD, FACS; Charles Coren, MD, FACS; Mark Dobbertien, MD, FACS; Ross Goldberg, MD, FACS; Marion Henry, MD, FACS; Mark Kashtan, MD; Amy Liepert, MD, FACS; Joshua Mammen, MD, FACS; Katherine McHugh, MD; Subhasis Misra, MD FACS; Alisha Reiss, MD; and Brett Tracy, MD.



Ross Goldberg, Chair, HPAC, and Alan Thorson, MD, FACS

ADVOCATE AT HOME

Meeting with your elected officials is a powerful way to raise the profile of issues and effect change. While members of Congress and their staff are well-versed on many issues, surgeons are the experts on surgical issues. Similarly, constituent relationships assist policymakers to gauge what is important to their constituents.

Senators and representatives return home to their states and districts during Congressional work periods. In-district meetings are a great opportunity to meet with policymakers nearby.

Through DAHP's Advocate at Home program, staff can assist with planning, preparing for, and executing a successful meeting or event. The Surgeon Advocate Appendix within this handbook provides additional information on how to conduct an effective in-district meeting.





SurgeonsPAC facts

Established in 2002, the American College of Surgeons Professional Association political action committee (ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC) is governed by an appointed Board of Directors comprised of Fellow, Young Fellow, and Resident members from numerous specialties. Just as the College strives to represent all of surgery and focuses on an extensive list of priorities, *SurgeonsPAC* works to build relationships with several different policymakers to ensure the College's advocacy and health policy priorities are recognized.

SurgeonsPAC remains among the top 15 PACs representing health care professionals in Washington, DC.* In line with Congressional party ratios, *SurgeonsPAC* has a track record of nonpartisan, balanced giving. This includes support for physician candidates and members of Congress, both majority and minority leadership, and members serving on key U.S. House and Senate committees of jurisdiction that handle health care policies and procedures.

It is very important to the ACSPA that *SurgeonsPAC* contributions are distributed to congressional advocates in compliance with Federal Election Commission (FEC) regulations. As a reminder, *SurgeonsPAC*'s current election cycle disbursements are available at surgeonspac.org/disbursements.

SurgeonsPAC donor levels and benefits

It is important to keep in mind that participation is more important than the amount contributed. For that reason, *SurgeonsPAC* offers several donor levels to its members, including unique benefits and incentives. Donor levels are merely suggested guidelines for *SurgeonsPAC* participation.

SurgeonsPAC activities

Visit *SurgeonsPAC.org* to learn more about fundraising and disbursement activities, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and more.

Become a **PAC champion** by educating your peers and encouraging their involvement. PAC literature, personalized presentation templates, data, and other resources are available upon request.

Host an event or fundraiser for your member of Congress and invite your colleagues and local physician community. This is a great way to get to know candidates or members of Congress and help cultivate a lasting relationship.

SurgeonsPAC encourages members of the College to become actively engaged in the political process and welcomes **requests to support federal candidates**. The *SurgeonsPAC* Board evaluates requests based on the guidelines above. When the *SurgeonsPAC* Board and staff make the determination to support a candidate, surgeon advocates have the opportunity to participate in an in-district check delivery or attend an event in Washington, DC.

Note: *Contributions to ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions are voluntary, and all members of ACSPA have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Federal law prohibits ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC from accepting contributions from foreign nations. By law, if your contributions are made using a personal check or credit card, ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC may use your contribution only to support candidates in federal elections. All corporate contributions to ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC will be used for educational and administrative fees of ACSPA and other activities permissible under federal law. Federal law requires ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC to use its best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and the name of the employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year. ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC is a program of the ACSPA, which is exempt from federal income tax under section 501c(6) of the Internal Revenue Code.*

*The Center for Responsive Politics. Opensecrets.org. PAC contributions to federal candidates. Available at: <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=H01>.





Gary L. Timmerman, MD, FACS; Mark Malangoni, MD, FACS; and James Gigantelli, MD, FACS
ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC Reception



John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS, and Rep. Neal Dunn, MD, FACS (R-FL-02)



Scott Kurtzman, MD, FACS; Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT); and Brendan Campbell, MD, FACS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is grassroots advocacy?

Grassroots advocacy comes in many forms including (but not limited to) letter writing campaigns, providing education on issues, testifying before governing bodies, working with local, state, and federal agencies, and more. The purpose of grassroots advocacy is to demonstrate to policymakers that a particular issue has strong support in their home districts among their constituents.

Does grassroots advocacy really make a difference?

Yes! But, strength in numbers and recognizing that it can take a long time to see the value or impact is key to the program's success.

How do I know if ACS is working on issues that affect me?

The College's advocacy activities at the federal and state levels were established to represent interests of the practicing surgeon and surgical patients. Be sure to regularly review our issue one-pagers, position statements, and more at facs.org/advocacy. If there is a local issue affecting your surgical practice and you would like more information on how to make an impact, contact DAHP staff.

Who are grassroots advocates?

A grassroots advocate is someone who cares enough about an issue to make their voice heard. Grassroots advocates help raise the level of awareness regarding specific issues at the local, state, or federal levels.

Who are grassroots advocates?

Grassroots advocates are seasoned grassroots experts who mentor peers and colleagues to encourage participation. They have preexisting relationships with their lawmakers, staff, and local organizations, and serve as trusted advisors.

Who are my elected officials?









Learning more about your members of Congress is easy. Visit *SurgeonsVoice* online and view "My Legislators," or go to house/senate.gov to look up your legislators by your ZIP code or state.

How do I know where my lawmaker stands on a specific issue?

Becoming educated about your elected officials' background, committee assignments, voting history, and relevant leadership roles can help provide a better understanding of issues of importance to them.

How can I learn more about becoming a surgeon advocate?

Establishing yourself as a surgeon advocate is crucial to making your voice heard. More specifically, regularly engaging with policymakers and their staff, and serving as a trusted resource on issues of importance to surgeons and surgical patients is essential. Become a surgeon advocate today to help advocate for meaningful, practical health policy proposals at the federal and state level.

-  Attend the annual ACS Leadership and Advocacy Summit
-  Become educated about ACS health policy priorities
-  Visit *SurgeonsVoice* online and participate in grassroots “Calls to Action”
-  Utilize social media and online tools and resources available to surgeon advocates
-  Learn about your legislators
-  Become an HPAC Councilor within your state
-  Host a facility tour or conduct a site visit
-  Help DAHP staff help you!

How do I set up a meeting with a Congressional office?

Reference the Surgeon Advocate Appendix, participate in the At Home program, and review the Grassroots Guide accessible to you at facs.org/advocacy/participate/surgeonsvoice/guide. DAHP staff are also available to assist with scheduling requests.

What is a “Call to Action”?

When lawmakers need to hear from their constituents to elevate a legislative priority, DAHP staff will issue a “Call to Action” to engage FACS and encourage them to contact their members of Congress.

Does my participation truly have an impact?

Yes! You are your best advocate. Your unique expertise will lead to many lawmakers, particularly your elected officials, looking to you for guidance on complex issues.

Where can I find additional information regarding ACS advocacy and health policy priorities?

Please visit *SurgeonsVoice* online or contact the ACS Division of Advocacy and Health Policy at ahp@facs.org or 202-337-2701.


A LOOK INSIDE THE




U.S. SENATE




U.S. HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES


Your role:
Contact DAHP
staff about ideas
for legislative
fixes. 

ACS' role: When a DAHP federal legislative priority rises to the level of a legislative "fix," DAHP staff drafts, or works with Congressional staff to draft, legislation and helps identify bill sponsors. 


Introduction: A Member (or members) of Congress introduces a bill, which is then read and referred to the committee(s) of jurisdiction.

Committee: The committee reviews the bill, holds hearings with subject matter experts, amends the bill, and votes it out of committee for consideration on the House/Senate floor.

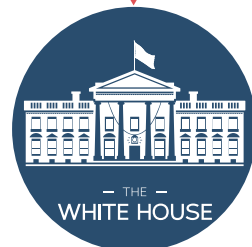
Your role:
Take action
and urge your
peers to do
the same. 

ACS' role: When lawmakers need to hear from their constituents to elevate a legislative priority, DAHP staff will deploy a "Call to Action" to engage FACS and encourage them to contact their members of Congress. 



Consideration: A bill voted out of a committee of jurisdiction moves to the full House/Senate chamber for additional debate, amendments, and final passage.

ACS' role: Many bills never make it through the committee process let alone become law. When the College has a legislative victory at any level staff might issue a press statement, include a write-up in an ACS publication, or thank the bill sponsor via e-mail, mail, or social media. 


Final passage: Both chambers must pass identical legislation before a bill can go to the President's desk to be signed into law.




LEGISLATIVE PROCESS




ACS' role: The federal legislative team meets with lawmakers and staff to discuss positive or negative implications of a bill, particularly how it has the potential to impact surgeons and patients, and assists with targeting cosponsors should ACS decide to support the bill.



Your role: Participate in the annual ACS Leadership & Advocacy Summit and meet with your elected officials in Washington and at home.



ACS' role: The federal lobbying team continues to monitor the bill's progress, evaluates the need for additional cosponsors, enlists coalition support, brings in surgeon advocates to testify, and more.



Your role: Strength in numbers is critical in this final stage. Call, e-mail, write, and Tweet your elected officials, share your personal story, and establish your position on the issue.



Your role: Educate your peers about the College's legislative priorities and victories, utilize social media to thank your representative and senators, and invite these champions to visit you at your workplace.



SURGEON ADVOCATE APPENDIX

Here you will find supplemental information to make your advocacy efforts in Washington and at home more successful.

UNITED STATES CONGRESS: PLAYERS AND PROCESS

Composition of Congress

Made up of two houses—the Senate and the House of Representatives—Congress’ primary job is to legislate or establish laws. There are a total of 435 U.S. Representatives and 100 U.S. Senators in Congress. While every state has two senators, the number of representatives in each state depends on its population.

Legislative Process

ACS advocates on behalf of surgeons and surgical patients by monitoring and lobbying for (or against) federal legislation that has the potential to impact surgical care and the environment in which it is provided.



ACS KEY COMMITTEES

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Comprised of 55 members, the Energy and Commerce Committee is one of the oldest standing committees in the House of Representatives and has responsibility over issues ranging from telecommunications, to consumer protection, to energy policy. It is also only one of two committees in the House with significant jurisdiction over matters pertaining to health care. The College is most actively involved with the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). A number of the College's legislative priorities pass through the Energy and Commerce Committee, including topics related to physician payment, cancer and trauma care, Health Information Technology (HIT), opioids, drug pricing, and medical liability reform.

House Committee on Ways and Means

The Committee on Ways and Means is the oldest committee of the U.S. Congress, and is the chief tax-writing committee in the House. The committee oversees revenue-related aspects of the Social Security system, Medicare, and social services programs. Because the Constitution requires that all revenue-raising provisions originate in the House, the Committee on Ways and Means is considered influential. Comprised of 40 members, the committee has jurisdiction over several of the College's legislative priorities, including physician payment under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Stark law, rural health care, and reducing physician practice burdens.

Senate Committee on Finance

Considered to be one of the most influential committees in Congress, the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance is responsible for taxation and other revenue measures in addition to overseeing issues pertaining to health programs under the Social Security Act, including Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and other health and human services programs. Comprised of 27 members, there are a total of six subcommittees within the full committee. The College is actively involved with both the full committee and the Subcommittee on Health Care. Nearly every legislative priority that would require a legislative fix or offset to Medicare or physician payment reform falls under this committee's oversight.

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) has jurisdiction over nearly all agencies, institutes, and programs within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Administration on Aging, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. In turn, this Committee has the ability to impact initiatives critical to the College such as opioids, HIT/interoperability, and more. Comprised of 23 members, there are a total of three subcommittees within the full committee, including a subcommittee on health. The College predominately engages with the full committee as this is where a majority of health care-specific issues are deliberated. Given the scope of this committee's work, ACS works closely with its members and staff to help identify potential new policy priorities.

GRASSROOTS GUIDE

Why meet in-district?

To be an effective surgeon advocate, nothing is more important than establishing a personal relationship with members of Congress. Conversely, to a member of Congress, there is nothing more valuable than input and support from constituents (voters!). Meeting with policymakers and/or their staff is extremely valuable to help advance the College's surgical advocacy agenda and provide you with the opportunity to develop key contacts with your legislators. Scheduling in-district meetings is easier than you think! Get started through participating in our At Home program.

In-district meetings

Scheduling your meeting:

Do your research. Every office is different, so be sure you get to know your member of Congress prior to your meeting.

Contact staff. Notify them that you are a constituent, surgeon, and Fellow of the College, and what issue(s) you plan to discuss. Visit house/senate.gov for specific contact information.

Follow-up and confirm. Be brief but specific. For example, "My name is Dr. John Smith. I am a constituent of Rep./Sen. Washington, and I am following up on a meeting request sent on May 22, 2018, to discuss physician payment issues." Once scheduled, confirming your meeting details and time is equally as important.

Be flexible. Members of Congress maintain extremely busy schedules, especially at home/in-district. Meeting details, locations, times, and durations will vary.

Utilize resources and support. The ACS Division of Advocacy and Health Policy staff is available to help coordinate a personal meeting, organize a site visit or facility tour, provide talking points, and more.

Tips for successful meetings

Utilizing the following tips can help lay the groundwork to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between you and your elected officials:

Get to know your members of Congress. Understanding background, committee assignments, voting history, and relevant leadership roles your member of Congress participates in will help you establish a level of respect within an office. Regularly visiting their website, signing up for e-newsletters or updates, and staying informed about key policy priorities are great ways to remain educated.

“Friend” or “follow” your elected officials. In today’s social media driven domain, politicians rely on Facebook, Twitter and other vehicles as easy, effective platforms to get their message across to constituents and vice versa. Because social media is set up to engage an audience, you too can educate, praise, or respond to your elected official.

Know before you go. Similar to getting to know your congressperson, knowing your issue(s) and recognizing their position(s) on said matters is critical to framing your ask. Honing in on one or two key issues per visit and framing them in the context of your legislator’s viewpoint (examples of how x initiative will help or hurt you, your patients, or constituents) will help ensure your request is clear. Regularly browse ACS publications like *NewsScope* and the *Bulletin*, and visit *SurgeonsVoice* and *SurgeonsPAC* websites, to learn more about advocacy and health policy issues that have the potential to affect surgeons and surgical patients across the country.

Make the ask. Help policymakers help you! Being attentive and respectful while confidently reinforcing your ask goes a long way in helping hold an office accountable. Your ask should be clear and may include the following: sponsoring or cosponsoring a bill, extending a follow-up meeting, encouraging your contact to stay in touch and consider you a resource when it comes to health care-specific issues, and so on.

Provide feedback. Your feedback and questions are important to us. In addition to completing a meeting evaluation form, the DAHP wants to know the following:

- Was the office responsive?
- Did the member of Congress agree to take action?
- Did staff request any additional information?
- Do you plan to schedule a follow-up meeting?
- Anything else you care to share.

You are your best advocate. Do not believe someone else is your advocate. We need all College members engaged in advocacy and political efforts.

You are your best advocate

SurgeonsVoice: Cutting Edge Advocacy

MISSION: Empowering surgeon advocates with necessary tools and resources to establish and maintain relationships with legislators to help advance the College's health policy priorities.

PURPOSE: Demonstrating strength in numbers to help elevate surgery's voice at the federal and state levels.

Contact the Division of Advocacy and Health Policy

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