American Association of Orthodontists Policy Achievements and Future Goals

It has been our pleasure to have people on our team represent the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) since 2006. We have appreciated the chance to help the AAO grow its federal government relations program over that timeframe, during which the association has notched some significant accomplishments that preserve the value of the professional specialty for AAO members. We have worked closely with the Board of Trustees (BOT), the Committee on Government Affairs (COGA), the Political Action Committee (AAOPAC), and the AAO staff to steadily improve the association’s advocacy efforts.

Our partnership with the AAO has resulted in substantial policy success for the association over the last 10 years. The AAO has been much more visible and active on important healthcare and tax issues that affect your membership.

- Your advocacy efforts in the debate over the Affordable Care Act (ACA) worked, leaving orthodontists as one of the medical professions least affected by the federal government’s fundamental reshaping of the healthcare marketplace.

- During the debate over the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, the AAO was a key player in removing a provision from the final bill that otherwise would have resulted in onerous new federal oversight of any transaction with your patients that involved a payment plan for medical services.

- When the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) proposed to implement new “Red Flags” rules on identity theft, the AAO worked with the American Dental Association (ADA) and other medical professional associations to delay enforcement of burdensome and costly new procedures for safeguarding patient information, and ultimately to secure passage of legislation to exclude medical professionals who do not receive full payment at the time when they furnish a service.

- The AAO also was a part of a major and successful business coalition effort to repeal a reporting requirement in the ACA that would have required businesses to submit 1099 forms for all purchases of goods and services over $600 annually. The provision would have imposed massive new reporting and compliance requirements for AAO members on everyday financial transactions with their vendors.

- Additionally, when members of the COGA talked with Members of Congress about how ACA-mandated reductions in Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) were hurting a patient’s ability to access orthodontic care, we worked with a bipartisan group to introduce the “Responsible Additions and Increases to Sustain Employee (RAISE) Health Benefits Act of 2015” (H.R. 1185) and turned it into a very popular legislative vehicle to expand the use of FSAs. The RAISE Act now has 71 sponsors in the House and is expected to be introduced in the Senate later this summer.

- When Congress passed a two-year medical device tax moratorium in December 2015, the AAO had been lobbying on that high priority item for several years.
In many of these efforts, you have increasingly coordinated with the ADA and other dental professional specialty associations on legislative and regulatory actions that affect your professions.

Now, the AAO is working to address the challenges of preserving the value of the profession. We see several elements to the AAO’s future federal advocacy goals, including:

- Passing the RAISE Act or similar changes to ACA to expand the use of FSAs and allow more patients the financial resources needed to plan for and access high-quality orthodontic care.
- Extending the existing moratorium on the imposition of the medical device tax past the end of 2017.
- Using conferences and technology to engage more AAO members in advocating specific policies that preserve and extend the value of the orthodontic profession and provide better care for patients.
- Educating policymakers about the risks to patients of mid-level providers expanding their scope of practice to include services that should be provided by a licensed dentist or orthodontist.
- Participating in the tax reform debate to make sure the interests of small business medical providers are fully considered in final legislation.
- Expanding the political impact of the AAOPAC to support candidates who recognize the value of your profession’s positive impact on patients.
- Involving an active COGA to help embed the advocacy agenda at all levels of the AAO’s operations.
- Advocating for a range of solutions to the student loan marketplace, to reduce the long-term cost of obtaining a degree in orthodontics by focusing on three issues:
  - Stop the meter from running - Reinstate the in-school interest subsidy for graduate student loans. This is what the Post Grad Act will do (H.R.4223).
  - Treat loan debt fairly in personal taxes - Double the allowable deduction and eliminate the income phase-out on deductions. This is what the Student Loan Interest Deduction Act (H.R.509) will do.
  - Allow better refinancing terms - Don’t prevent borrowers from refinancing to lower rates. This is what the Student Loan Refinancing Act (H.R.649) will do.
- Integrating the fast-growing corporate orthodontic community with the association’s advocacy campaigns if the AAO leadership determines doing so is appropriate.