

appointees composed primarily by union members and insurance companies. In committee testimony regarding this bill, I noted that the CA ACC has always supported data collection when properly done by scientists, and we pointed out that SB 680 (described above) can be expanded to include other clinical outcomes via a process that we support. AB 2967 passed out of the Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee and failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Although this is an important victory in the short term, we expect similar legislation to be reintroduced in the coming year.

Finally, important legislation was introduced in 2008 regarding nurse

practitioner scope of practice. AB 1436 gave nurse practitioners authority to admit patients to hospitals, order tests, and treat patients without physician oversight. The CA ACC regarded this as giving nurse practitioners the authority to practice medicine without a medical license. The bill died before being heard in Committee due to strong opposition. We understand another bill will be introduced this year.

These examples clearly demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of physician input in the legislative process. It is therefore imperative that each physician participate in some way in the legislative process. When the CA ACC sends out

legislative alerts, please read them and take action by calling or writing your local representative. ■

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## Involving Yourself in the Political Process

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The need for physicians to become involved in the political process is becoming more and more important. With health care discussions at the federal, state, and local levels of government, there is a need for representatives to hear from those who interact with the health care system on a daily basis. Many times, health care issues are raised and a representative will have limited or no exposure prior to considering a vote. It is critical that the representative make an educated decision. This is where the physician's input is beneficial.

One example was in California when the state legislature was con-

sidering a bill to create a pilot program to allow nonemergent percutaneous coronary intervention procedures to be performed without on-site surgical backup. There was evidence to support either side of the debate. Legislative staff had done their research, but still had a number of technical questions. They turned to the California Chapter of the American College of Cardiology (CA ACC) for answers. Speaking directly to a cardiologist, legislative staff was able to better understand the potential impact of the bill. As a result of this input from a cardiologist, the bill was signed into law in 2008.

It is common for state legislators in California to have over 300 bills dealing with some area of health care. Many times the topic is fairly complex, putting the legislator in a difficult position to understand the underlining impact. The advocacy team at CA ACC recognizes the value and importance of having individual physicians contact their legislator to help educate them on issues impacting the cardiology specialty. Over the past 15 years, the CA ACC has utilized physicians' expertise numerous times to help legislators make an informed vote on various bills. We actively encourage physicians to contact their local legislator to not only

to get to know them, but to offer themselves as a resource on health care-related questions.

Another factor explaining the need for physician input is term limits. Legislators rarely serve long enough to become comfortable with the nuances that impact cardiology. Legislators want input from individual physicians, especially their constituents, on certain health care issues. The last thing a legislator

wants to get is a phone call from a constituent asking them why they voted for a bill that has a negative impact on their specialty.

It is inevitable that the cardiology specialty will be impacted by recent health care discussions. One way to ensure that cardiology will have a voice during these discussions is to contact your representative. I strongly encourage you to reach out to your local representative and

invite them to visit your practice. Show them what you do on a daily basis and how you help your patients. At the same time share with them some of the issues you face. As you develop this relationship, the representative will seek you out for help in better understanding the health care legislation they are facing. When the representative begins to seek your advice, you have truly mastered the advocacy process. ■