AGD members visit with lawmakers to advocate for general dentistry

Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) member dentists attended the AGD’s annual Government Relations Conference recently in Washington, D.C. The members and guests went to the nation’s capital to discuss advocacy and lobbying issues that affect their practices and patients.

More than 60 AGD members from across the country and representatives from the National Dental Association and American Orthodontic Society attended the event. During the two-day conference, attendees met with legislators from both political parties to discuss topics including alternative dental health care providers, the lack of practicing dentists on Institute of Medicine (IOM) panels, and the Dental Coverage Value & Transparency Act’s Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) provisions, among others.

A total of 145 appointments were made with various representatives in Washington, D.C. The meetings took place April 12 and 13.

“It is events like the Government Relations Conference that demonstrate AGD members’ ability to come together and change the face of dentistry in the eyes of our elected leaders,” said AGD President Fares Elias, DDS, JD, FAGD. “It is imperative that we maximize every opportunity to communicate member needs and educate our elected officials about how their actions affect our practices and our patients.”

Conference attendees had the opportunity to hear presentations from Morton Kondracke, a local journalist for more than 30 years, executive editor of Roll Call, and a regular contributor to public affairs programming; and JP Paluszkiewicz, deputy chief of staff and health policy advisor to Rep. Michael Burgess, MD (R-Texas). Paluszkiewicz oversees the congressman’s legislative agenda and acts as chief advisor in all public policy issues.

Rep. Paul Gosar, DDS (R-Ariz.) — a special guest due to his dual role as politician and dentist — spoke about encouraging dialogue within the profession and with elected officials, the success of the 1099 repeal, and many other opportunities for change. Rep. Gosar sponsored the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act (H.R. 1150) in an effort to repeal the McCarran-Ferguson Act, a federal law that exempts the insurance business from most federal regulation.

“Rep. Gosar’s attendance at the conference was extremely valuable and provided a fresh perspective on the issues we all face as dentists,” said Myron Bromberg, DDS, chair of the AGD’s Legislative & Governmental Affairs Council. “His insight and guidance surely will help advance our efforts to advocate for general dentists across the country.”

Additionally, in recognition of his outstanding legislative achievements throughout the past year, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) received the Legislator of the Year Award. Sen. Leahy also has been a strong leader in a cause that is very important to the AGD: The repeal of the McCarran-Ferguson Act.

“Being a part of this event not only furthered my interest in advocacy issues, but it helped the AGD get its messages to key stakeholders,” said Bettina Laidley, DMD, FAGD, president of the Vermont AGD, who attended for the presentation of Sen. Leahy’s award. “I’m glad that Sen. Leahy’s efforts were recognized in this way, as he has made significant contributions for our state.”

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