

GAC Report to ASCLS-NJ Members

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Government Affairs Committee (GAC) Report:

- Washington DC may become the 14th state/city to require licensure for MLS. The bill includes histologists/cytotechnologists, and phlebotomists. Even if a person is grandfathered in, s/he must be at least certified. Waiting to hear if the bill passed.
- November elections: both the House and Senate are Republican. They will control committees and the floor. Many committees have new leadership and we will have to educate them at Legislative Day. We expect a busy 2015 for Congress.
- PAMA (Protecting Access to Medicare Act): Laboratories must submit how much they are paid for each test and by each payer. Deadline is January 2016. This is important- need all labs to submit the data so that real reimbursements can be established from the pool of laboratory data. CMS is revising the Laboratory Fee schedule; we are nominating someone from ASCLS to be on the advisory committee.
- CMS and the FDA are becoming concerned about waived testing. CMS wants to reopen the laws governing waived testing and restrict these tests. Should be an interesting discussion.
- The position of ASCLS in regards to Laboratory Developed Tests (LDTs) is that we are glad that the FDA is investigating for the patients' safety. Elissa Passiment attended a FDA hearing recently and was allowed to speak for 4 minutes. She drafted comments to the FDA, which are to be approved by the ASCLS GAC and then sent to the FDA. Elissa stated that many laboratory groups attended the hearings, and some are in favor of restricting LDTs and others were not. There will be an advisory council, and we will be nominating someone from ASCLS.
- In the CRomnibus budget bill, Title VII (Health Professions Education) and Title VIII (Nursing Education) fared well with better funding than last year.
- The final piece of legislation that just passed the House and Senate in December was HR 1281 – the Newborn Screening Save Lives Reauthorization Act. This act

encourages state and communities to test newborns for heritable disorders. Section 6 requires the director of the CDC to provide for quality assurance of laboratories involved in screening newborns and children for heritable disorders. We lobbied for this bill last March in DC.

- CPT code pricing decisions – CMS has developed new drug testing and molecular codes for Medicare payers – G-codes- that will replace the CPT codes; however, Non-Medicare payers will continue to use the CPT codes for these tests. The reimbursement rates for these codes have not yet been published. More than 30 Pathology services for outpatients are being reimbursed by CMS (Medicare) in a package instead of fee for service. We do not know the impact yet.

Possible lobby topics for Legislative Day:

1. AACC's effort to harmonize methods
2. PAMA
3. Workforce issues
4. Budget opportunities (after government budget is approved)

It may be more difficult to get appointments this year- don't be discouraged!

Respectfully Reported by Kim A. Przekop

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