



Embrace Action: Advocate for Perioperative Nursing



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Most state legislative sessions take place during the first half of the year, and 2017 has been a busy year for legislation affecting health care. In regard to legislation specifically affecting the perioperative profession, the efforts of the AORN Government Affairs Department align with AORN's Policy Agenda. AORN boldly pursued legislation to require an RN circulator to be present in every OR for the duration of each surgical procedure in two states: Arkansas, where the bill failed to pass the House Public Health and Welfare Committee, and Vermont, where the bill passed the Senate and currently sits in the House Health Committee. AORN's goal is to have all 50 states require RN circulator presence in the perioperative setting. The profession needs definitive language specifying that the circulator role must be fulfilled by an RN for the duration of each surgical procedure; this can be achieved with legislation or regulation in individual states. Moreover, Government Affairs staff members are leading an innovative, first-of-its-kind effort for AORN to require facilities to have policies mandating the evacuation of surgical smoke from ORs in one US state. This legislation has been heard by the state's House Health, Education, and Welfare Committee and Senate Health Committee, and currently is being held for further study.

Government Affairs staff members also are concentrating efforts on allied health care policies because several states have introduced legislation intended to regulate the work of central service technicians and surgical technologists. This type of legislation ranges from title protection to voluntary and mandatory registration and up to certification requirements. In this arena, AORN works to ensure that the supervisory presence of the RN is recognized and that bills align with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services regulations and

surveyor guidance. AORN is also actively monitoring legislation affecting RN first assistant reimbursement, safe patient handling, safe staffing, and reporting requirements for the OR. As we approach the second half of 2017, it is still possible to see other legislation or proposed regulations presented, and AORN will readily analyze and respond to those. When attempting to influence legislation of any kind, the Government Affairs team needs grassroots members to provide constituent support. It is important for nurses to be aware of initiatives and voice their concerns or support for legislation that can affect their practices. Members can contact the Government Affairs Department with questions or to discuss any legislation in their state. To explore the details of how this collaboration works, I spoke with Danielle Glover, MPA, manager of AORN Government Affairs.

AORN GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS Q&A

NW: Where can AORN members learn about what is happening in their states?

DG: There are several ways members can stay informed and learn about legislative trends. First, each state has its own dedicated page under the AORN Government Affairs web page: www.aorn.org/governmentaffairs. On each state page, members can read articles specific to their own state, see what legislation AORN is tracking, find their elected officials, identify the volunteer state legislative coordinator and his or her contact information, and take action if there is an active advocacy campaign in the state. In addition, Government Affairs staff members provide regular updates on legislation and regulations in AORN's weekly e-newsletter, *Periop Insider*. Members can also follow AORN's

Government Affairs Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AORNgovtaffairs.

NW: How can members support or get involved with AORN Government Affairs' efforts?

DG: From contacting legislators to writing letters to the editor to testifying, there are many ways for members to get involved. Each month we have a National Legislative Forum call, during which Government Affairs staff members provide a high-level overview of legislation at the state and federal levels affecting perioperative nurses, lead training sessions, present guest speakers, and discuss action steps for the month. Effective in 2016, the National Legislative Forum is open to all members to participate in the monthly conference call. Every January, AORN asks members to send an e-mail to their legislators to introduce themselves and offer their expertise. National Time Out Day and Perioperative Nurse Week also offer members opportunities to contact legislators and write letters to the editor to educate the community about patient safety.

If there is active legislation in members' states, members can support Government Affairs and ensure that perioperative nurses' voices are heard by always responding immediately to any action alert e-mails they receive. These are extremely time-sensitive action items but are easy to complete. Working closely with me on legislative strategy at the state level is another option. We need nurse constituents to provide insights and to speak with legislators about how potential laws could affect patient safety and perioperative practice. I work with members before they meet one-on-one with legislators or testify on a piece of legislation. Members can also volunteer to be the legislative liaison for their chapter and work with the volunteer legislative coordinator and Government Affairs to provide updates and action items to other members.

NW: What if individuals have not been involved with policy making before? Are there advocacy training opportunities?

DG: Most people have not been involved in the policy-making process. The good news is that it is easy to get involved, and individuals will learn as they go. We have members who have led legislative initiatives as well as those who do not even know who their legislators are. Participating in the National Legislative Forum call is a great way to learn through observing. Each year, a recorded policy and advocacy webinar is made available to members. I give a brief presentation for chapter leaders at the Chapter Leaders Workshop (formerly the Volunteer Leadership Academy). Every year at the AORN Global Surgical Conference & Expo, there is an

education session with a legislative focus. When there is legislation in a state that requires me to fly into a state, there is usually an opportunity for members to receive brief state-specific advocacy training.

AORN encourages members to attend their State Nurses Association Lobby Days, where attendees receive advocacy training, have the opportunity to meet with legislators, and can advocate for general nursing issues. For those who want to take their training to the next level, Government Affairs sends one to three members a year to either the American Nurses Association Advocacy Institute or the Nurse in Washington Internship. Finally, there is an Advocacy Tools & Resources section of the Government Affairs web page (<http://www.aorn.org/community/government-affairs/advocacy-tools-and-resources>) that links to resources, including an Advocacy 101 Handbook.

NW: What if there is not anything currently happening in a member's state, but the member still wants to participate?

DG: Building relationships and being engaged before there is active legislation and regulations in a state is essential to future success. If there are no bills or regulations affecting a state this year, it does not mean there will not be in the future or that there are not current efforts underway to change policy. Staying informed on legislative trends across the nation is important to prepare for activity in each state. When there is a break in legislation, it is the perfect time to forge relationships with legislators and other stakeholders. Members should read *Periop Insider* articles, send letters to legislators for National Time Out Day and Perioperative Nurse Week, and follow general health care policy trends in their state. For complete information on AORN's Policy Agenda, visit <http://www.aorn.org/community/government-affairs/policy-agenda>.

CALL TO ACTION

Colleagues, Danielle Glover reminds us that we cannot influence our practice if we do not sit at the decision-making table. Each of us should consider the time we have available and the manner in which we can become involved. There are a number of methods available to members to help determine the manner in which you would like to contribute:

- **Explore the Government Affairs web page.** By accessing <https://www.aorn.org/community/government-affairs>, members can evaluate the tools and resources available (Sidebar 1).
- **Join the National Legislative Forum.** Contact Danielle Glover at dglover@aorn.org to add your name to the list to

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