

GRASSROOTS LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS PROTECT SURGICAL ASSISTANT CAREERS

Washington Lobbyist Michael Dunn, CEO of top Washington, DC, Public and Government Affairs Firm Michael E Dunn and Associates spoke at the 33rd Annual AST National Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dunn's exciting 3½ hour workshop, "Power, Politics, and You," was sponsored by the Association of Surgical Assistants and attended by over 400 AST conference attendees on Friday morning. The workshop provided a great overview on grassroots efforts, and the opportunities that surgical technologists and surgical assistants have as professionals and as individuals to enhance their own careers by becoming involved in the political process.

Dunn stressed the importance of individual involvement in legislative efforts at the state level, whether in small groups or working through organizations like ASA and/or AST (and the state assemblies) in order to not only improve the profession-

al standing of surgical assistants nationwide, but also to protect our careers. He stressed the danger of complacency, or a reliance that our "physicians will never let anything bad happen to us," warning that his own involvement in the political process has shown him first hand the strength of those groups that take an adversarial position to surgical assistant legislative efforts. The only solution, and the only protection, he said, is to "Get involved, and stay involved, and never turn your back on your adversaries."

A key idea presented at the workshop was the concept that whenever an individual or an organization such as ASA gets involved in the political process and manages to pass legislation, someone "loses." Each individual and organization must decide "which end of that equation to be on," and every organization has to decide "whether to choose its own destiny or

continued on page 2...

NOW AVAILABLE NEW MALPRACTICE COVERAGE FOR SURGICAL ASSISTANTS

As many of you already know, NPG will no longer be offering malpractice coverage for surgical assistants, due to the loss of an underwriter. New policies are now available through Marsh and Associates, a service of Seabury and Smith. We believe that the rates offered by Marsh and Associates are very competitive, and offer better coverage than previous companies were able to offer.

For more information, please contact Marsh and Associates directly at 1-800-621-2008, or go to www.surgicalassistant.org for further information.

have that destiny chosen for it," said Dunn. The real key to success, he said, is constituent involvement, rather than a reliance on an organization's elected representatives and government affairs experts, because they are not the people the legislators represent. Further, a more compelling message is brought to legislators by individual constituents, who feel compelled that the legislative or regulatory effort they are working on is the key to their own future.

TO BE COMPELLING, THE MESSAGE
MUST BE BROUGHT TO LEGISLATORS
BY INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUENTS,
WHO FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE
LEGISLATIVE OR REGULATORY
EFFORT THEY ARE WORKING ON IS
THE KEY TO THEIR OWN FUTURE.

Also presented was valuable information about fund raising at the grassroots level, and why fundraising is important. Dunn presented the idea that because each legislator represents so many individual constituents, it is very difficult to get to the top of the "pyramid" of influence, such that a legislator would sponsor legislation, and stand behind the constituent throughout the process. Two ways were proposed to get to the top of the pyramid:

1. Volunteer time and personal effort to that legislator's campaign, "Help that legislator get elected or re-elected."

2. Donate money to that legislator's campaign, to "Help that legislator get elected or re-elected."

Clearly, surgical assistants are very busy, and with job and family, personal time to volunteer for a legislator's campaign would be very hard to come by. How much donated money does it take to get on a legislator's radar screen? According to Dunn, because of election laws, any donation over \$200 at the federal level becomes public information, and legislators use this information when they receive a call from a constituent to determine whether that constituent is one that "has to be listened to." At the state level, this amount

funds within our organization to enhance the value of our dollars.

While ASA does not have a PAC fund developed currently, this is a concept that should be explored. Several of our state level organizations have already tried political fundraisers with some success, and the Illinois Surgical Assistants Association has actually held a golf tournament to raise funds for Representative Burke for the last two years. The relationship with Rep. Burke that has developed because of these efforts has been invaluable.

At the end of Dunn's presentation, ASA and AST members asked questions and



At the AST 34th Annual National Conference, ASA sponsored Washington lobbyist, Michael Dunn, who encouraged surgical technologists and surgical assistants to become individually involved in legislative efforts at the state level.

may be even smaller. Legislative aides, according to Dunn, may actually use a donor print out list to in order to screen constituent calls.

Dunn also proposed several ideas for enhancing the value of fund raising efforts, including the holding of fundraisers (our surgical assistants in Illinois have already done this!) and the development of Political Action Committees or PAC

participated in a lively discussion about state-level involvement and grassroots efforts. Overall, the commentary from the attendees was overwhelmingly in favor of proactive efforts to "choose our destiny" before it is chosen for us.

HOW CAN SURGICAL ASSISTANTS CHOOSE OUR OWN DESTINY?

The first step in ensuring our future is educating ourselves and our legislators. Learn how and get your lobbying feet wet at the First Annual Association of Surgical Assistants Forum, scheduled for September 13-15 in Washington, DC. "The Business of Surgical Assisting" will be the focus of the two-day event, which kicks off with a lobby day on Capitol Hill on Friday, September 13. ASA will help members coordinate appointments with legislators and/or their staff on Capitol Hill, and Bill Finerfrock, our Washington lobbyist from Capitol Associates, will provide a morning "prep rally" to prepare attendees for their meetings. Forum participants will be joined by ASA staff and committee members.

Saturday's educational sessions will consist of several panel discussions and presentations focusing on the business and political issues faced by non-physician surgical assistants, with an emphasis on idea-sharing and networking. This will be an excellent opportunity for already established surgical assistants as well as those who may just be starting a business to share ideas and learn the basics.

Sunday morning, the forum will focus on the various different surgical assisting organizations. As most surgical assistants are aware, there are multiple surgical

assisting credentials, and multiple organizations for surgical assistants. Over the last several years, the various organizations have begun to work together on legislative and regulatory efforts. A panel discussion at the ASA forum will focus on ways the organizations have worked together, and ways to break new ground.

The forum promises to be an exciting one, and Washington, DC, is always a fantastic place to be, especially in the fall. There will be plenty of opportunities to get out and "see the sights," and time to meet others in the profession and learn about our new organization.

Space is limited, and many have already registered. The deadline for the group rate at the Washington Marriott is August 12, 2002. Since we will need to coordinate appointments with legislators, early registration is appreciated! To register, fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and fax it with your credit card number to 303-694-9169, or call 800-637-7433.

NEWS & NOTES

What's happened with my membership

In any new organization, there are growing pains. We have definitely had some with the formation of our new organization, the Association of Surgical Assistants. Some of you who have joined may not have received a member card or membership letter in a timely fashion, and we apologize. You will receive your card very soon, and we have put an all-new database in place to manage the membership of the new organization. Thanks for bearing with us, and if you have any questions about your membership, please call 800-637-7433, extension 238, or email help@surgicalassistant.org.

Frequently asked questions

Where can I get information about recommended standards of practice for the surgical assistant, reimbursement, credentialing, taxes and answers to other SA business-related questions?

ASA members can download the Surgical Assistant Resource Guide at no charge from www.surgicalassistant.org. The guide is a valuable resource for members and contains information on: scope of practice, recommended standards of practice, formal education, recommendations for SA program development, the SA curriculum model, CST/CFA certification, continuing education, the credentialing process, reimbursement, legislative issues, AST official statements, setting up an SA business, sample letters and forms, and a related terms.



First Annual ASA Forum

SCHOLARSHIP TO NIFA SURGICAL ASSISTING SCHOOL AVAILABLE.

CALL BEN PRICE AT 303-694-9130, EXT 238 OR VISIT WWW.SURGICALASSIST.ORG FOR DETAILS.

First Annual ASA Forum REGISTRATION FORM

ASA Forum (includes Friday reception, Saturday luncheon and all sessions)

ASA member	\$195	\$	_____
AST member (non-ASA member)	\$200	\$	_____
Nonmember	\$220	\$	_____
Guest Saturday Lunch Ticket	_____ x \$35	\$	_____
Total			\$ _____

Date _____ Member/Cert No _____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail _____

Circle title: SA ST Other _____

Money order/check enclosed for \$ _____

VISA/MasterCard/AmEx No. _____

Expiration Date _____ Total Amount Charged \$ _____

Signature _____

Make check or money order payable to ASA

- Mail to ASA, 7108 C South Alton Way, Centennial, CO 80112
- Fax to: 303-694-9169 or call 800-637-7433 8am-5pm, M-F, MT
- Download a registration form at www.surgicalassistant.org

September 13-15 2002, Washington, DC at the Washington Marriott

presented by  The Association of Surgical Technologists

Friday, September 13

2 CEs IN CATEGORY 2

9-11 am **Capitol Hill Briefing and Prep for Lobby Day**

Noon-4:30 pm **Lobby Day - Capitol Hill**

Meetings with Legislators at the Capitol, re: Medicare Reimbursement

5-6 pm **Capitol Reception**

Saturday, September 14

8 CEs IN CATEGORY 2

8:30-10:20 am **Business Considerations for the Surgical Assistant**

10:30-11:50 am **Panel Discussion**

Employment Options for the Surgical Assistant

Noon-1:20 pm **Luncheon and Keynote Speaker**

Health Care Issues

1:30-2:20 pm **Business Operations**

2:30-4:20 pm **Panel Discussion**

Legislative and Regulatory Issues

Sunday, September 15

3 CEs IN CATEGORY 2

7:30-9:30 am **Panel Discussion**

Working Together—Surgical Assistant Organizations

9:30-10:30 am **Certification and Licensure Issues**

Attendance is limited to 150. Confirmation will be mailed at least 20 days prior to the forum, and on-site registrations will be accepted on a space-available basis. All cancellations must be received in writing by September 1, 2002, and individuals will receive a refund of the amount paid less a \$25 administration fee. No refunds after September 1, 2002.

Accommodations: Washington Marriott. Located in the desirable West End of Washington, DC, just a short stroll from the charm of historic Georgetown and minutes from the most popular sights of the nation's capital. Washington Marriott, 1221 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, Phone: 202-872-1500. The ASA group rate is \$149. Reservation deadline: August 11, 2002.