



Making Change Work for You!

With the publication of this edition of *Academic Pharmacy Now* comes the opportunity for you, members of AACP, to think about your advocacy investment during the 112th Congress. Short of exhorting the importance of an active citizenry in the maintenance of our rights stated generally in the Declaration of Independence and specifically in the United States Constitution, let me just share that the importance of your engagement remains paramount! The 111th Congress will end shortly after I write this column. What level of funding federal agencies and programs of interest to academic pharmacy will receive is yet to be determined. The political winds are fickle. As you have already seen at the state level there is the expectation of reduced federal expenditures for non-defense discretionary programs for the next several years.

Whether the 111th Congress ends with a short-term or year-long continuing resolution or the passage of separate, minibus or omnibus appropriations bills, each option will set a different stage for the start of the 112th Congress. None of these options is favored by more than a slim majority in either chamber. Passage of the appropriations bills will allow FY11 funding to be established with increases for some non-defense, discretionary programs. It will also allow for the special funding known as earmarks to remain in the legislation. A year-long continuing resolution will likely keep the federal government operating at FY10 levels throughout FY11 but eliminate any earmarked funding. A short-term continuing resolution, depending on its length, portends the members of the 112th Congress will establish FY11 funding levels when the continuing resolution expires.

A significant number of new members will join their colleagues in the 112th Congress as a result of the November 2010 elections. The Democrats remain the majority party in the Senate, by four members. In the House of Representatives the Republicans now are the majority party, by 49 members. With this change comes great opportunity for you and your advocacy interests. While I hope that your interests primarily focus on the needs of academic and professional pharmacy, there is real opportunity for you to quickly establish relationships, regardless of the issue, especially if your Senator or Representative is one of the newly-elected. It is difficult to predict voting blocs and individual behaviors in the United States Congress. It is easy to predict that newly-elected members, many of whom pronounced their desire to change Washington, will face significant challenges in changing anything. They certainly will not be able to change anything of interest to you without establishing yourself as a ready resource to facts and evidence that advance what has the potential to be of shared benefit to you and your elected official.

Establishing yourself as a ready resource to facts and evidence strengthens your role as an engaged citizen and the public policy you want to influence. Public policy development is enhanced when anecdotes are supplemented with information illustrating

outcomes and fulfillment of expectations. AACP works to illustrate the outcomes associated with the teaching, research and service of our faculty and institutions. The articles in this and every edition of *Academic Pharmacy Now* provide real-life evidence of the high quality of pharmacy education and its value to your students. The inclusion of colleges and schools of pharmacy into the Clinical and Translational Science Awards program of the National Institutes of Health and the listing of grants and awards in the school news section confirms your research as providing real dividends in terms of new knowledge, advancement of science, potential cures of disease and improved health outcomes. Likewise, there is the increasing recognition that improved medication therapy management improves health outcomes, reduces potentially avoidable hospital readmissions, reduces emergency room use due to adverse drug events, reduces individual healthcare costs and establishes significant value to health insurance plans. The successful approaches to medication therapy management highlighted in this edition are the direct result of pharmacy faculty engagement with community-partners focused on the needs of patients.

Staff working for new members of Congress are more likely to have less experience than those who work for an incumbent. While the member of Congress is important, cultivating a relationship with the staff member is equally important. This is the individual to whom you will be directed to share your knowledge, stories and facts. Establishing this relationship now will ensure that you continue to be an important member of their research and evaluation team. Directing them to the AACP Web site and sharing with them articles from *Academic Pharmacy Now*, along with information of how your institution benefits from federal funding, will create a more successful member of Congress, establish you as a recognized resource for health and education issues, and with your persistence, build a champion for your personal and professional interests. Help the newly-elected change Washington in a way that helps everyone!

Past and current issues of *Academic Pharmacy Now* are available on the AACP Web site. Sending a staff person the link to an issue is an excellent way to easily share information regarding pharmacy education. To view past issues, visit www.aacp.org/news/academicpharmnow.

To find information regarding your newly-elected or your incumbent members of Congress, go to the Elected Officials portion of the AACP Legislative Action Center: <http://aacp.capwiz.com/taacp/dbq/officials/>. Enter your zip code and you will access information about your members.

To read about scheduling a visit with your members of Congress, visit the Advocacy portion of AACP's Web site and read "Advocacy 101": <http://www.aacp.org/issuesandadvocacy/advocacy/AdvocacyInAction/Documents/Making%20a%20visit%20020110.pdf>.