



Dear ENT Advocacy Network Member:

January 22, 2021

Legislative and political activity directly affects our practices and our patients. As a leading advocate for otolaryngology-head and neck surgery, we hope you enjoy reading this edition of *The ENT Advocate*, your premier source of advocacy information for the specialty!

Lead Story

ENT PAC's "First 50" Campaign Kicked Off January 1, 2021!

Don't miss ENT PAC's fifth annual "First 50" campaign! The "First 50" campaign is a fundraising effort to garner at least 50 contributions of \$1,000+ (Chairman's Club or Leadership Club) during the month of January. "First 50" investors will have exclusive access to a 2021 conference call series with high-ranking individuals from Congress and the Administration. If you have questions, would like additional information, or would like to invest in this exclusive opportunity before it's too late, visit www.entpac.org or contact ENT PAC staff at entpac@entnet.org.

Legislative and Political Reports

117th Congress Convenes

The first session of the 117th U.S. Congress convened on January 3 with more than 65 new federal legislators sworn in. The balance of power has shifted slightly, as Democrats will continue to have a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives and now will have a narrow majority, with Vice President Kamala Harris as the tie-breaking vote, in the U.S. Senate. The AAO-HNS is currently meeting with new lawmakers to help educate them on the specialty's legislative priorities. As bills begin to be introduced on Capitol Hill, watch for upcoming opportunities to contact your Congressional representatives and make your voice heard!

AAO-HNS Calls on Governors to Prioritize Otolaryngologists in COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Plans

On December 11 the Academy [sent letters](#) to each of the 50 state governors, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia urging prioritization of otolaryngologists and other frontline medical workers for receipt of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration's first approved COVID-19 vaccine. The letters implored governors to consider the particular vulnerability of otolaryngologists in treating patients with COVID-19 as vaccine distribution plans are established in their individual state.

Fifth COVID Relief Package Signed into Law

On December 27 President Trump signed Appropriations Act, 2021, a \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package and \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending bill. The package provided economic relief through additional funding for a wide constituency. Specifically, the bill included a new round of stimulus checks, extended and expanded unemployment benefits, funding for small businesses and transportation, COVID-19 vaccine distribution, and schools. The legislation also includes a number of provisions addressing healthcare that are of interest to practicing otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeons. Click [here](#) to read the Academy's preliminary analysis of the bill's impact on our members and their patients. We will keep you informed about any changes and their effects as the law is implemented.

ASLP Interstate Compact Update

Despite facing unprecedented physical, social, and economic challenges in the states, the flawed audiology and speech-language pathology interstate compact (ASLP-IC) legislation continues to be introduced around the country. Currently, ASLP-IC legislation has been filed in GA, IN, KY, MD, NE, WA. The AAO-HNS and our dedicated group of State Trackers are working to amend this legislation in each of these states.

CMS Extends the Deadline to Apply for a 2020 Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Exception

For the 2020 Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) performance period, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is using the Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances policy to allow clinicians, groups, and virtual groups to submit an application requesting reweighting of one or more MIPS performance categories due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the varying effects of the pandemic on eligible practitioners, CMS has extended the deadline to submit a COVID-19 related 2020 extreme and uncontrollable circumstances [application to February 1, 2021](#).

