

From the President's Desk

Strengthen your state societies

Emily E. Volk, MD

March 2022—If you're reading this column, you're likely a member of the CAP. But are you also a member of your state pathology society? Too many pathologists think that joining the CAP is enough. The truth is, the CAP can have a greater impact—and pathologists can be more effective physician advocates for their patients—when partnering with robust state pathology societies.

State societies are essential because so many of the policies and regulations governing our work as pathologists are enacted at the state level. Balance billing rules, scope of practice issues, and insurance regulations are often decided by each state. So many issues about how we are licensed, how we practice, and how we get paid are regulated at the state level. Moreover, CAP federal advocacy is buttressed by strong state pathology societies that can provide grassroots support with their respective members of Congress.

That's why each state needs its own pathology society to represent our interests. These groups are fundamental to our state and federal advocacy agenda. The CAP works closely with state societies, getting from them important information about emerging trends affecting pathologists—such as what's happening with third-party payers on the ground—and giving to them important resources to support local advocacy programs.

Having that state society infrastructure in place helps magnify the CAP's impact and reach. It helps our organization work better for practicing pathologists and gives us a way to mobilize people in particular areas when issues arise.



Dr. Volk

Consider just a few examples of what state pathology societies accomplished in conjunction with the CAP last year. The North Carolina Society of Pathologists and the CAP successfully opposed adverse out-of-network legislation displacing the federal No Surprises Act and averting low out-of-network payment rates. The North Carolina Society of Pathologists also successfully amended pharmacist scope of practice legislation, while the Rhode Island Society of Pathologists and the CAP successfully amended genetic counselor scope of practice legislation. I could cite many more examples if I had enough space.

The CAP offers a number of resources to support state pathology societies. Last year, we released two guides—one that can assist societies in growing their membership and another on advocacy fundraising. We used our virtual conference platform to host 13 meetings of state pathology societies, allowing them to stay active and connected during the pandemic. CAP leaders (I was among them) gave advocacy updates at 21 state pathology society meetings in 2021 as well. We also have quarterly calls with state society presidents to find out what's keeping them up at night, what's working for them, and how they're resolving common issues.

On a personal level, I can say that state pathology societies offer great opportunity for advancement. One of my

first leadership roles was with the Michigan Society of Pathologists. I served on the board and later as the society's president. It was a wonderful way not only to serve the pathology community but also to grow as a leader. During my time there, we focused on scope of practice and reimbursement issues, in addition to delivering practical educational programs.

My experience in Michigan helped give me the confidence to run for the Board of Governors and eventually president-elect of the CAP. As a candidate, going to the state societies to meet with pathologists in their home states was one of the most important things I did. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with pathologists and understand what was on their minds. Having viable, active state societies made that possible.

During the chaos of the pandemic, state societies also gave us local support communities we could lean on when we needed help. This sense of community is a real antidote to the burnout we have all faced in the past two years. It's a place where individuals who feel they have relatively little power can come together, advocate effectively, and effect real change.

I encourage everyone to join or to take a more active role in their state's pathology society. If your state does not have a strong society and you would like assistance from the CAP in launching or revitalizing a state-level association, please reach out to Megan Wick, director of state relations, at mwick@cap.org.

Dr. Volk welcomes communication from CAP members. Write to her at president@cap.org.