

From Sam Brunelli: October Legislative Update

HR 646

We have been very busy continuing our education campaign on HR 646, acupuncture, and traditional East Asian medicine in general. This week we are finishing the delivery of the 30,000 letters that have been sent to us from the practitioner/student and public community. This delivery has taken longer than anticipated simply because of the sheer volume of letters and the need to organize and then transport them to the Hill. Thank you to all those who participated in the letter writing campaign!

We now have six additional sponsors who have come on board to support the bill. Their support is a direct result of this letter writing and education campaign. The new sponsors are: Ed Royce, Judy Chu, and Lynn Woolsey, all of California, as well as James McGovern of Massachusetts, Robert Wexler of Florida and James Moran of Virginia.

We have two goals in October: *To get someone to agree to introduce a Senate companion bill and to increase the number of House co-sponsors.* When this occurs, Senator Inouye's health staffer has agreed that he will come on the bill when it is introduced. Meeting requests have been made for Senators Boxer and Feinstein.

At the same time, we are continuing to look for new avenues in the Health Insurance Reform activity to insert the legislation.

Opt Out Provision

A key point that has arisen this month in the acupuncture community is whether we can have HR 646 modified to include an "opt out" provision. This is something we are pursuing with Cong. Hinchey's office, and we will be crafting an appropriate solution so that an amendment can be included by one of the sponsors of the bill or so Cong. Hinchey can introduce an amendment. We will make sure the Senate bill includes this provision. Furthermore, even if a bill passes into law without the provision, we would still be able to obtain this modification in negotiations. I know there are acupuncturists who do not want to be forced into a government program, and we want to help them maintain their cash-based business.

National Foundation of Women Legislators

The participation of AAAOM at the NFWL annual conference over Labor Day weekend was a great boost for both the national and state goals of the organization. Many state legislators participated in the one day health fair and, for the first time, had a hands-on acupuncture demonstration. Several of the acupuncturists continued to share acupuncture demonstrations with meeting attendees throughout the conference. This one-on-one time was a great educational and relationship building opportunity.

The three presentations at the conference (breakfast session, round table session, and subcommittee session) all proved to be important and informative. The information provided to attendees was well received, and the members supported by vote the following resolutions:

- The NFWL's National Policy Committee on Healthcare & Empowerment moved that Congress should ensure that licensed acupuncture practitioners are eligible to be included as providers in government insurance programs and health delivery programs; and
- The NFWL's National Policy Committee on Healthcare & Empowerment voted that all 50 states' governments, territories, and tribal communities are urged to license the practice of acupuncture and Oriental herbal medicine or improve their licensure guidelines to encourage a broader scope of practice.
- The NFWL's National Policy Committee on Healthcare & Empowerment urges the President and the Executive branch to collaborate with relevant private sector partners to create an herbal safety database and to increase research to investigate the safety and efficacy of traditional Chinese and Oriental herbal medicine.

It was repeatedly requested that the AAAOM participate in next year's conference as well. (November, 2010).

We have requested from the AAAOM a listing of the regulations by each state as well as recommended language to expand scopes of practice in the states that need modernization of their existing scopes of practice and model legislation for states that have no licensure.

TCM Herbal Project, Adverse Effects Database

Meeting requests have been made to Richard Nahin at the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and Paul Coates of the Office of Dietary Supplements. In making the meeting request and outlining briefly the proposed project, I have put forth the suggestion that a good first step would for AAAOM to coordinate a small conference of experts in collaboration with their offices. (This is a standard process that NIH likes to use to gather data, determine the need, and discuss strategy.)