



Fighting for What's Right for Our Members

BY SHEILA BUSH



We often tout the WMS legislative successes to our members and attempt to convey the degree to which our advocacy team fights to strengthen and bolster the physician voice in important state regulatory and legislative conversations. Likely at some point in time during the discussions surrounding this topic of advocacy members have become fatigued and frustrated because our position on an issue wasn't consistent with their personal opinions or triggered anger because WMS didn't win on the bills of the utmost importance to them.

All of the positive responses, as well as the negative ones, are appropriate and earned, as we win some battles and lose others. WMS won't get every issue right every time, and in a group of vastly different personal and professional backgrounds we can't possibly represent all opinions all the time, but what we will do is never stop fighting to the very best of our ability for what we think is right for our members and their patients.

The 2019 Legislative Session was one for the records in more ways than this column has room to explore. WMS took some hard hits and was pulled into a few of the most contentious debates I've seen in my time with the organization. Five different scope of practice battles consumed our efforts while we did our best to weigh-in and appropriately represent our members in legislative debates surrounding abortion, insurance regulation, restructuring the family medicine residency programs, and air ambulance regulation, not to mention the year's long debate in response to the growing concerns around opioid addiction and abuse.

One irrefutable fact is that healthcare is a critical priority for Wyomingites and consequently each of our legislators. Senate President Drew Perkins (R-Casper) was quoted in his opening remarks saying, "We [the state] can enhance competitiveness and access to medical care without having to recruit a single new healthcare provider just by allowing providers to perform the services in which they are trained." These words represent an attitude that tells me we are at

a time in Wyoming where we can watch the coastal waters recede, exposing the ocean floor, as a tsunami approaches. That tsunami will be legislation attempting to further erode the lines, differentiating physicians from all the other healthcare providers on the team, along with a myriad of other ideas in healthcare cost transparency, data sharing and technology innovation. While all of these ideas may have merit, the devil will forever be in the details. WMS will be charged with ensuring the light is shined on those details, warning of the unintended consequences that can come from the quick fixes of today.

There's no time to waste in getting the medical society front and center in key conversations around the state. Whether it's continuing the talks we started with our new Governor and the ENDOW project or taking a more active role in organizations like the Wyoming Business Alliance, the time is now to make sure the physician voice and critical perspectives are a valued piece of the dialogue. Focus and energy being dedicated to this effort are exponentially increasing, and the last thing we want is for

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WMS to not be well-positioned to contribute and weigh-in on those efforts as they develop, rather than responding once they're formed.

If you haven't already, check out the full legislative summary available on the WMS website and make plans to attend our annual conference this summer. We are heading back to the Jackson Lake Lodge where WMS and WAPA members, along with nearly all of our prominent state specialty societies will gather to share stories, hear exciting educational presentations and plan for the future. WMS can't do any of what we do without every single one of you. If you disagree with any of this year's legislative outcomes, I urge you to call your county trustee or reach out to WMS directly. Our door is always open to our members. We value your opinions and we need your vast experience to help to inspire the future of healthcare in Wyoming! 