



## The Capitol Key

A newsletter service for the Key Contacts of the American College of Physicians by ACP Services, Inc.

December 2008

### Record Attendance Realized for Leadership Day 2008

Leadership Day 2008, held in May, saw more than 500 members take time out of their busy schedules to bring visibility and voice to policies and issues that affect internists. Issues covered included access to care, physician reimbursement, and the future of primary care. For the first time, every state was represented, along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. A record turnout of medical students and associates also helped to fuel the excitement for Leadership Day.

The record turnout was largely due to the back-to-back scheduling of Leadership Day and Internal Medicine 2008 in Washington, DC—providing ACP the opportunity to promote Leadership Day to all members for the first time.

Attendees heard from members of Congress, legislative staff and administration officials about how they view the issues of greatest concern to internists. Among the many notable speakers were: 2008 Boyle Award Recipient Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-9th OH); 2007 Boyle Award Recipient Carolyn Clancy, MD, MACP, Director, Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ); Rep. Michael Burgess (R-26th TX); Rep. Tim

Murphy (R-18th PA); and Anand K. Parekh, MD, MPH, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health (Science & Medicine), Department of Health and Human Services.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP, was awarded the Key Contact of the Year for 2008 at the awards dinner. Keynote speaker at the dinner was Pulitzer prize-winning journalist and author Haynes Johnson.

The following day, the most important element of Leadership Day occurred, attendees took the College's message directly to their members of Congress. At the conclusion of the meetings on Capitol Hill, nearly 150 Leadership Day participants gathered at the Capitol to bring visibility to physicians and show support for the College's legislative efforts at ACP's first-ever "Closing Ceremony and White Coat Rally."

Thanks to Leadership Day participants, and other concerted efforts by ACP members and our allies, Medicare cuts in physician payment were prevented. Comprehensive legislation has also been introduced on improving access to primary care services that incorporates many of the College's recommendations—advocacy does make a difference.



Part of the Florida delegation gathering in front of the Capitol.

### Leadership Day 2009

MARK YOUR CALENDAR TODAY FOR LEADERSHIP DAY 2009 ON MAY 19-20. WITH A NEW CONGRESS, NEW PRESIDENT—AND HEALTH CARE REFORM ON THE TABLE—2009 WILL PROVIDE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE OUR ISSUES. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING LEADERSHIP DAY NEXT SPRING, CONTACT YOUR CHAPTER GOVERNOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO LET HIM OR HER KNOW OF YOUR INTEREST.



19-20



White Coat Rally 2008

## Key Contact of the Year Award

By Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP

*Editor's note: Following is the acceptance speech delivered by Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP, Key Contact of the Year for 2008, at the Leadership Day awards dinner.*

I am truly honored to receive this award tonight. The American College of Physicians is an outstanding organization filled with great physicians and a dedicated staff that truly believe in providing the highest quality care for our patients and the necessary professional environment required to do that job. This organization has helped me personally and professionally to be a better physician throughout my 20 years in private practice in rural East Georgia.

I appreciate this Key Contact award. The reality is I just have a big mouth. If you knew both my parents you would know I just can't help it; it's in my DNA. I am also heir to a legacy of strong, faithful, opinionated, Southern women who came before me. This award is also for all the steel magnolias back home. But most especially, I am deeply loved and tolerated by two of the greatest people in my life, my husband and partner in medical practice, Dr. James Lemley and our precious daughter, Laura. They are enjoying some peace and quiet at our house this week while I'm here in Washington, DC, running my big mouth again.

Now I am very passionate but very pragmatic about what I think and do. Just as General Petraeus was here in Washington recently to bring the news from the frontlines of the war, we are also here in Washington to give a briefing to Congress from the front lines of health care. In primary care, we are the infantry on the ground. Without adequate supplies and logistical support we are in a losing battle to care for our nation's elderly. Without major changes in the way Medicare conducts its business, our patients and our profession will be major casualties of a system that does not meet the needs of its citizens.

I'm in the inaugural class of the Georgia Physician Leadership Academy this year. As a requirement of participation, we have to do a project. One of my classmates is the President— elect of the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians, Dr. Howard McMahan. We decided to work together on a grassroots advocacy project between the Georgia Chapter of ACP and the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians designed to engage both physicians and patients in advocacy regarding the Medicare payment crisis and particularly the impact on primary care physicians and the access to care by Medicare patients.

We used documents from both our national organizations and personalized them to our state then blasted them out by e-mail recently. The cover letter to the physician explained how to use the materials to

educate their patients and communicate with their Congressmen. The materials sent included a

one page document explaining the key points on the impending Medicare payment cut written in simple language, a sample letter for doctors to personalize and send to their Congressmen, a sample letter for patients to personalize and send to their Congressmen, a petition to sign in the office, a one page explanation of the Patient Centered Medical Home and finally a poster that could be printed and displayed in the medical office. We just published an Op-Ed piece in the Augusta Chronicle, entitled Your Access to Health Care Depends on Congress.

We are also working on a possible podcast about the pay cut and the Patient Centered Medical Home. I am using these tools in my office and have a display table next to the check in window. I also had the poster blown up and laminated and put on the office door for everyone to see as they leave my office. The most common reaction by patients has been dismay that they had no idea this was happening. Many have signed the petition and taken sample letters to send.

Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

We're not only here to brief Congress on the status of the frontline of health care. We are also here to share a vision of what primary health care should be.

The Patient Centered Medical Home is our vision. It is the approach to providing comprehensive primary health care for individuals that fosters long-term partnerships between our patients and us, their personal physicians. Our job tomorrow is to help our Congressmen see our vision, and with our help make this vision a reality for our patients and for our profession.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Where there is no vision for the primary care of our patients, our profession and our patients will perish. But where there is shared vision by us as doctors of internal medicine, our patients can live and prosper and so can our profession.

You are the expert on your patients and your practice. Go tomorrow and share the reality of your practice and then share the vision of where we need to go. Our patients and our profession are depending on it. So get your boots on the ground.



Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP, accepts her Key Contact of the Year award from Donald W. Hatton, MD, FACP, Chair-elect, Board of Governors.

## A Conversation with a New Physician in Congress: Internist Bill Cassidy, MD

William K. Cassidy, MD, a member of the American College of Physicians and a hepatologist, was elected to represent Louisiana's 6th Congressional district on Nov. 4. He'll take office on Jan. 6, but he recently talked with ACP to highlight his coming move to Washington.

With a new president, new members of Congress and issues that need to be addressed immediately, Dr. Cassidy says he knows he needs to be ready to participate in the health reform debates the moment Congress begins deliberations. As a member of Congress, he looks forward to having a strong working relationship with the American College of Physicians.

While serving in the Louisiana Senate, Dr. Cassidy quickly found that a similar mindset is needed for work in medicine and in politics. While medicine requires service to one patient at a time, in politics however it's necessary to continue serving a much broader constituency.

Having training in medicine, Dr. Cassidy continues, has provided him with a natural segue to the legislative process. Many of the ways he learned to be a good internist serve him in being a well-regarded elected official. As an internist, he already knew how to be a good listener, to keep his word and to show up when expected. As a physician, he helped patients heal. By practicing similar values as a legislator, he works to heal the maladies of an even broader spectrum of people.

When he was asked to run for Congress, he naturally thought of the impact it would have on his family and work. Both he and his wife, a general surgeon, felt that if health care reform was going to be tackled it would be in the 111th Congress. Given his desire to be a voice in debates, he says he knew that if he ever were to run for Congress, now was the time.

Committee assignments have not been given yet, but Dr. Cassidy knows he wants to be involved in health care. He is a teacher, works at a public hospital, has a private practice and has worked on public-private health care partnerships. He is confident he has the perspective, experience and interest to provide valuable

input into the health reform debates. He says he hopes to land a position on the House Committee on Energy & Commerce, and also wants to serve the needs of his district by serving on the Transportation and Financial Services Committees.



William M. Cassidy, MD, prepares for his move from Baton Rouge, LA, to Washington, DC.

He says he knows firsthand that physicians are frustrated with the administrative hassles of private insurance companies and with the inadequacies of Medicare reimbursement. There are no easy answers as we address cost, access, and quality of health care in America. But, Dr. Cassidy looks forward to working with physicians to answer these problems as we make health care better for our patients.

Dr. Cassidy's special words to ACP's Key Contacts:

"As an elected official, I am quite thankful for all the time and resources friends and constituents volunteered to my campaign. In small and big ways, with each contact you have more and better access to your elected officials. There is no substitute for being involved. Become part of your legislator's shared agenda. If you are there for the long haul, he or she knows you can be counted on to provide good advice."

Dr. Cassidy noted that physician groups supported him from the beginning, and he looks forward to having an ongoing relationship with them. There are many ways to participate. Volunteer for a campaign. Contribute to a campaign. Share your thoughts. Congressman-elect Cassidy reminds his fellow advocacy-minded physicians, "Politics is a team sport. No one gets elected without an active team behind him or her." Legislators know you are on their teams and they know you are there for his or her priorities, whether they be for a district, state or country.

### Op-Eds and Interviews

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP: Augusta Chronicle, Aug. 2008 Op-Ed at [chronicle.augusta.com/stories/042008/op\\_\\_195676.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/042008/op__195676.shtml)

Mushtaq Sheikh, MBBS: MedPage Today, Aug. 2008 radio interview at [www.medpagetoday.com/Campaign08/Campaign08/10708](http://www.medpagetoday.com/Campaign08/Campaign08/10708)

Richard J. Simons, MD, FACP: The Patriot News, Nov. 2008 Op-Ed at [www.pennlive.com/editorials/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/opinion/1227221719241930.xml&coll=1](http://www.pennlive.com/editorials/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/opinion/1227221719241930.xml&coll=1)

## Sen. Baucus Advisory Council

By Jay Larson, MD, FACP

*Editor's note: ACP Key Contact Jay Larson, MD, FACP, of Montana had the honor of being asked to serve on Sen. Baucus' (D-MT) Health Care Advisory Council. Sen. Baucus is the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over tax-related legislation, such as Medicare payment policies. The council was formed this fall and consists of 30 people representing various areas of health care and exists to recommend health care reform ideas to Sen. Baucus. Below Dr. Larson shares his experience of being on the Council.*

The Baucus advisory council is just a part of my continuing to develop relationships with Sen. Baucus and his health care staff.

About this time last year, the rapid decline in general internal medicine finally spurred me to act. I was going to fix the health care system. It could not be any more difficult than treating a patient with multiple medical problems on multiple medications. General internists of

my generation were leaving practice at an alarming rate and medical students were pursuing other professions. After 18 years of practicing general internal medicine in Helena, Montana, I have developed a wonderful practice. The notion that the people I have cared for would end up with a poor chance of finding another internist, once the system finally broke me, was annoying.

After months of educating patients about the state of general internists, a patient told me that I should meet Senator Max Baucus. The day after Christmas, Sen. Baucus and I sat down to discuss the plight of primary care and the United States' expensive, but poor outcome, health care system. The senator listened patiently and after an hour he directed me to talk further with his Senate Finance Committee health care staff.

Since then, ten Senate Finance Committee hearings and an all day Health Reform Summit were held on health care reform. When possible, I shared the challenges of practicing general medicine and recent articles on health care reform. The senator and committee staff politely reviewed the tome of information I sent to them.

In September 2008, I was invited to join Sen. Baucus' Montana Health Care Advisory Council. Each member was charged with up to five policy recommendations for health care reform. My final policy recommendations, focused on strengthening primary care, are:

Create a "primary care" government organization which has the capacity to evaluate the issues of primary care and authority to help implement strategies to improve the primary care system;

Determine the current state of the U.S. primary care work force;

Reduce paperwork burden on primary care physicians;

Initiate the use of a primary care provider (PCP) CPT modifier code Evaluation and Management (E&M) for Medicare recipients; and

Reduce student debt for physicians pursuing primary care. Shift GME dollars from specialty residency programs towards primary care residency programs.

Serious health care reform will be happening in early 2009 and I am glad to be part of it. Other general internists can be part of the process too. It just takes a meeting with your senators or representative.

*"Change is disturbing when it is done to us. Change is exhilarating when it is done by us"*

—Rosabeth Kanter, Harvard Business School.

## Shared Your Opinion Lately?

If not, chat weekdays on the  
The ACP Advocate Blog  
by Bob Doherty

The American College of Physicians (ACP), the world's largest medical specialty society, invites you to participate in posting discussions related to Policy and Advocacy News for Internists on The ACP Advocate Blog with Bob Doherty.

The ACP Advocate Blog with Bob Doherty is meant to foster conversation and dialogue about timely *Policy and Advocacy News for Internists*. We encourage readers to reply to posts, and to each other. We invite reasonable comments from ACP members, policy makers and others regarding ACP issues.

<http://blogs.acponline.org/advocacy/>

# Insider Views of the Democratic National Convention

By Larry Lehrner, MD, FACP

*Editor's note: Three ACP Key Contacts had the opportunity to attend the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver. Below is an excerpt of Larry Lerner's, MD, FACP, Nevada, experience.*

As the spouse of a Congresswoman, I have a unique perspective of the Democratic National Convention. This was my third convention—2000, 2004 and 2008. By far the 2008 convention had the most enthusiasm surrounding all aspects of the event. In spite of the often bitter primary campaign, by the time the delegates arrived in Denver everyone was focused on party unity and winning the White House.

While the goal of winning the White House had also of course been present in 2000 and 2004, there was something bigger in the air in Denver. The slogan "Change" had taken on a life of its own and everyone really was working for and anticipating a dramatic

change in direction for our country with an Obama presidency.



The crowds were very excited and attentive for all the speeches. The convention floor was jammed and it was almost impossible to move. Everyone was crammed in like sardines. The move to the football stadium for Obama's acceptance speech gave everyone a little more room to breathe. It truly was amazing to see 85,000 people pack the stadium to hear the speech. Personally, I thought the stage managers went a little overboard on the Roman theme, but his speech was electrifying and the 85,000 people left fired up and ready to spread the message of change.

*Photos courtesy of the Democratic National Committee*

## Take Action Now


[www.acponline.org/lac](http://www.acponline.org/lac)

### PRESERVING PATIENT ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE ACT (H.R. 7192)

Primary care is facing an ever increasing shortage of physicians trained in general internal medicine, family medicine and pediatrics. Recent studies have shown that the number of primary care physicians is declining at an alarming rate.

Have you asked your senators and representative today to be an original cosponsor of the Preserving Patient Access to Primary Care Act (H.R. 7192) for the new 111th Congress that convenes in January? If not, please visit the [Legislative Action Center](#) today and ask them.

**Take Action**



# THE ACP ADVOCATE

*Advocacy and policy news for internists.*

The ACP Advocate is a biweekly e-newsletter provided by the College's Washington, DC, governmental affairs division, to provide ACP members with news about policy issues affecting internal medicine and patient care.

[TheACPAdvocate@acponline.org](mailto:TheACPAdvocate@acponline.org)