

Florida Chapter Successfully Advocates College Policy at the Local Level

The Florida Chapter was instrumental in getting a state law passed that addresses racial and ethnic disparities in health care. The bill, "Florida Healthy People 2010 Program" (S.1178) was signed by Governor Bush on June 24 and reflects several of the objectives contained in the ACP's position paper "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care."

The new law:

- Requires the state to annually report on health disparities and actions taken by the state to correct them
- Creates "minority physicians networks" to increase access to underserved populations
- Promotes educational opportunities to help doctors and other health care workers better understand the scope of health care disparities
- Fosters the increased use of interpreter services in health care settings

There are several bills currently in Congress that address racial and ethnic disparities. The College has sent letters in support of two Senate bills - S.1833, "Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act of 2003" and S.2091, "Closing the Health Care Gap Act of 2004."

The Florida chapter's achievement demonstrates how College policies can be successfully advocated at the local level and the importance of working closely with state medical societies.

The attached article summarizes this initiative.

An abridged version of the ACP "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care" position paper and related articles are available at <http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/141/3/226>.

Additional information on the Florida law (S.1178) is available at http://www.flsenate.gov/session/index.cfm?BI_Mode=ViewBillInfo&Mode=Bills&SubMenu=1&Year=2004&billnum=1178.

If you have any questions on these or other topics, please contact Shuan Tomlinson, State Health Policy Coordinator, at 800-338-2746 ext. 4547 or by email at stomlinson@acponline.org.

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