The General Assembly is closing out its session for 2017-2018 in October, with an agenda that includes two dozen bills that could impact physicians and patients. PA-ACP has been actively lobbying the legislature on behalf of internists and their patients on more than 50 separate pieces of legislation this session.

The General Assembly this month passed legislation requiring subjects of Protection from Abuse orders to surrender firearms and weapons within 24 hours. Red flag legislation which would allow family, loved ones and law enforcement to seek extreme risk protective orders requiring firearms and ammunition be surrendered by those who may pose a threat to themselves and others is in the works. While headlines have focused on sexual abuse, domestic violence and firearms legislation, many other bills could have significant impact on medical practice.

Also in the Governor’s hands is HB 126, which will allow health care providers to prescribe or dispense auto-injectors to public organizations and facilities, and provide for reimbursement of patient expenses associated with participation in cancer clinical trials.

Major issues that are still being addressed involve telemedicine, prior authorization, opioid use and prescriptions, scope of practice for midlevel providers, firearms control, synchronization of medical prescriptions for patients, medical professional liability, patient notification of test results, and excessive paperwork.

In more than a dozen cases, PA-ACP has successfully worked with key committee chairs and legislative leadership to amend bills that would otherwise have had unintended consequences for physicians – or their patients.

Senate Bill 780, which would establish rules for the practice of telemedicine in Pennsylvania and requiring insurers to pay for medically necessary services appears ready for final consideration. PA-ACP had testified in support of telemedicine use for chronic care and disease management and worked for amendments that removed physical therapy from being a covered service.

We also expect passage of a bill to establish the Rural Health Redesign Center Authority and the Rural Health Redesign Center Fund to protect and promote access by residents of rural counties to high-quality health care.

The PA-ACP Health and Public Policy Committee and the Governing Council will meet this fall to establish priorities for action in the 2019-2020 session of the General Assembly. If you want to be part of that process, contact your Governor today!