

MOA Sets Agenda for Annual Legislative Conference



The 2006 Annual Missouri Optometric Association Legislative Conference will be held Monday, January 9, 2006 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City.

The day will begin with two hours of continuing education featuring a panel of participants discussing "Patient Care: Advocacy Skills for Better Delivery of Services." Included in the panel will be Dr. Jim McClendon, an optometrist who is a member of the Alabama House of Representatives. He was a featured speaker at the AOA Mega Meeting in October and promises to be an entertaining and enlightening speaker.

The Honorable Mary Rhodes Russell, Judge, Missouri Supreme Court will bring information about Missouri's Judicial System and the Missouri courts. We are pleased to have Dr. Michael Ditmore, Director of the Division of Medical Services, address the group on Medicaid issue. Even in the face of budget cuts and changes to the eyecare components of Medicaid, Dr. Ditmore in his first year as director has worked closely with the MOA to assure a fair delivery of services.

Also In This Issue

- More Than 30% of Child Vision Disorders Missed
- Facts on Children's Eye Exams
- AOA Optometry Career Center Helps Displaced O.D.'s Find Practice Opportunities
- AOA Dues Increase Notice
- FDA to Regulate Decorative Contact Lenses
- 93rd General Assembly
- How to Communicate with Your Legislator

The noonday address will be given by Senator Delbert Scott (R – Lowry City). He has been an advocate for Children's Eye Exam legislation, carrying the bill successfully through the Senate Committee last year. He will share his thoughts on the upcoming session and strategies for a successful Children's Bill this year.

Our own Dr./Rep. Terry Swinger and Dr./Rep. Steve Tilley will share their views of the upcoming session and where Optometry fits in the sessions' agendas.

The Lieutenant Governor, Pete Kinder will once again host a reception for the MOA in his Capitol office in the afternoon and the now famous cinnamon rolls will be delivered to all elected officials in the Capitol.

The evening will culminate with the annual Legislative Reception. Doctors, staff and legislators will have a chance to interact and discuss issues of common interest as the legislative session begins.

President's Message

Thomas W. Hobbs, O. D., President

It is hard to believe that as I write this it has only been about a month since I became president of the MOA...it actually seems like it has been quite a bit longer!

I have had the opportunity to visit a couple of the societies to date and it has reinforced the need to get out and interact with the membership at the local level. It is easier to talk and get a better idea for how they feel about the issues.



From Left: SLOS Trustee Dr. Tom Cullinane, MOA President Dr. Thomas Hobbs, and Rep. Vicki Schneider (R- 17).

At the St. Louis Optometric Society meeting, they hosted a legislative panel, and four of the local legislators were in attendance. The legislators entertained questions from those in the audience and gave insight on how to best communicate on important issues. It was very educational, and I would encourage every society to do this on their local level. I am sure that these legislators will be more willing to listen to the issues of their optometric constituents since we took the time to listen to them.

Of all the information revealed the most important was the fact that legislators prefer to be contacted personally and that they do value our personal opinion.

This just enforced the fact that EVERY one of us needs to make it a priority to contact our legislator and let them know how we feel about the issues important to us. Of course we still desperately need those who have not done so to contact their own legislator and let them know you would like to see a children's eye exam bill and not a screening bill.

In an ongoing effort to assist Speaker Jetton with the introduction of an eye exam bill the MOA will host the Second Annual Children's Vision Summit on December 7, 2005 in Jefferson City under the direction of Dr. Mark Curtis. Invitees to this event include Representative David Pearce; Senator Norma Champion; Christopher Benjamin, Speaker Rod Jetton's chief of staff; Charlie Ballard, Senator Delbert Scott's chief of staff; Deb Cook, Missouri Association of School Nurses; Gary Sherman, Department of Social Services; Belinda Heimericks, Executive Director, Missouri Nurses Association; and Penney Rector, Missouri Council of School Administrators.



Executive Director Zoe Lyle chats with SLOS Trustee Dr. Jeff Weaver and Dr. Earl Hunter

We certainly hope that through this effort we can create alliances with most if not all of the members in attendance. If you have any contacts within any of these organizations and feel you can help form an alliance please contact Zoe Lyle or Dr. Mark Curtis to know how to best proceed.

Another significant event in the very near future will be the legislative meeting on January 9, 2006. At this meeting the agenda includes Sen. Delbert Scott, sponsor of the Children Eye Exam bill in the Senate; Dr. Michael Ditmore, Director, Division of Medical Services; and the Honorable Mary Rhodes Russell, Judge, Missouri Supreme Court. However, one of the most important events is the opportunity to meet and talk with the legislators as we deliver the famous cinnamon rolls and host the reception that evening. The children of Missouri would love to have each and everyone of you in attendance to help us solidify a bill that would allow each of them have the best vision possible as they start their learning process. So please make this a priority on your calendar and I'll see you at the Capito!



More Than 30% of Common Children's Vision Disorders Missed

As nearly one-third of America's preschoolers fall through the cracks of vision screenings, the American Optometric Association (AOA) says that change is essential. Calling for a policy of "zero tolerance," the AOA has responded to alarming results from Phase 2 of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Vision in Preschoolers (VIP) study, meant to identify whether vision screening can accurately identify preschool-aged children who would benefit from a comprehensive vision exam.

According to the NIH research, neither trained nurses nor trained lay people in the study using the best screening tests possible were able to identify nearly one-third of even the most prevalent vision disorders in children. Disorders such as amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (eye misalignment), and refractive errors (poor vision that can be corrected with glasses or contact lenses) were missed during the study's screening process.

"These results are staggering and deeply concerning," said Dr. Richard Wallingford, O.D., president of the AOA. "Optometry is committed to ensuring that no child is left behind due to vision problems."

Overall, the NIH findings are consistent with earlier NIH research (April 2004) that identified comprehensive eye exams administered by optometrists and ophthalmologists as the "Gold Standard Eye Examinations" for school-aged children.

"AOA leadership and doctors of optometry have long realized the need for comprehensive eye exams especially for young children," said Wallingford. "We need teachers, parents, educational institutions and lawmakers to join with us in showing that we have zero tolerance for failing to identify vision problems in our kids that can be readily diagnosed and treated by an optometrist. I commend the NIH for commissioning this critically important research into children's vision which continues to show that comprehensive eye exams are the most effective way to ensure that vision problems do not prevent children from learning."

According to the AOA, vision screenings are not diagnostic nor do they typically lead to treatment, rather, screenings serve as an indication for a potential need to receive further eye care. Many screening facilities also often lack equipment to screen you children. In this particular study, the most advanced screening instrument used, the Retinomax Autorefractor, missed 32% of the vision conditions being specifically tested for in participating children. The second most advanced instrument, the SureSight Vision Screener, missed 36% of the children's vision disorders. Other testing instruments had failure rates as high as 50%.

"Approximately 25% of all school-aged children have vision problems," said Wallingford. "Clearly the prevalence of vision disorders present in children and the limitations of vision screenings support the need for and value of early detection through a comprehensive eye and vision exam by an eye doctor. One child missed is one too many. We need to work collaboratively toward zero tolerance."

In an effort to bolster children's vision initiatives across the country, the AOA is actively supporting HR 2238, the Children's Vision Improvement and Learning Readiness Act of 2005. This bipartisan legislation now before congress was introduced May 10 by Reps. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and seeks to provide states with funds to diagnose and treat vision problems in school-aged children. HR 2238 has quickly amassed 148 co-sponsors, including Rep John Boozman, O.D. (R-AR), the only doctor of optometry serving in Congress.

Facts on Children's Eye Examinations: Let's Open Our Eyes to the Problem

- 40% of pediatricians did not perform vision screening on children 5 and older. (Marcinak and Yount, Clinical Pediatrics, V. 34, No. 7)
- 62% of the children who failed the vision screening performed by their health care provider were not recommended for appropriate follow-up care. (Clemen, et. al., Clinical Pediatrics, March 2002)
- 7% of children who passed a vision screening were found to have a vision problem in need of correction. (De Becker, et. al., Ophthalmology, V. 99, No. 6)
- 50% of parents were unaware two months later that their child had failed a vision screening. (Wasserman, et. al., Pediatrics, V. 89, No. 5)
- Nearly 2/3 of the children that failed a vision screening did not comply with the recommended treatment despite immediate access to care. (Preslan and Novak, Ophthalmology, Volume 105)
- 11.3 % of children that passed a vision screening were found to have a vision problem in need of correction. (Poterio et. al., Journal of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Stabismus, V. 37, No.2)
- 6.1% of children that passed a vision screening were found to have a vision problem in need of correction. (Robinson, et. al., Amer. Journal of Public Health, Volume 89, Number 2)
- "When a 5-6 year old failed an initial vision screening, the average delay before evaluation by an eyecar professional was 4.1 years. (Yawn, et. al., Journal of School Health, V.66, No. 5)
- 5.8% of children that passed a vision screening were found to have a vision problem in need of correction. (Kennedy, et. al., Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology, V. 30, No. 4)
- Pediatricians did not perform vision screening on 1/3 of children, including 60% of three-year-olds. (Wasserman, et. al., Pediatrics, V. 89, No. 5)
- "If the goal of preschool vision screening is not only to prevent amblyopia, but to treat other ocular pathology...then formal eye acuity should be performed." (Kemper, et. al., Pediatrics, V. 104, No. 5)
- 8.9% of children that passed a vision screening were found to have a vision problem in need of correction. (Spierer et. al., Ophthalmology, Volume 106, No. 5)
- Approximately 40% of the children who failed the vision screening did not receive the recommended follow-up care. (Donohue, et. al., Ophthalmology, V. 107, No. 9)
- Six months after training, 60% of pediatric practices said that they still screened "none" or "almost none" of their 3-year-old patients. (Hered R and Rothstein M, Pediatrics, V. 112, No. 1)



93rd Missouri General Assembly

January 4, 2006

Legislative power in Missouri is vested by Section 1, Article III of the 1945 Constitution in the General Assembly, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives.



The Senate consists of 34 members, elected for four-year terms. Senators from odd-numbered districts are elected in presidential election years. Senators from even-numbered districts are chosen in the “off-year” elections. Each senator must be at least 30 years of age, a qualified voter of the state for three years and of the district he or she represents for one year. The lieutenant governor is president and presiding officer of the Senate. In the absence of the lieutenant governor, the president pro tem, elected by the Senate members, presides.

The House of Representatives consists of 163 members, elected at each general election for a two-year term. A representative must be at least 24 years of age, a qualified voter of the state for two years and of the district he or she represents for one year. The House of Representatives is presided over by the speaker, chosen by the members, and in the absence of the speaker by the speaker pro tem.

How to Communicate With Your Legislator

Communication is a two-way process of sending and receiving ideas, opinions and information. In order for your message to be received by your legislator, you need to follow a few guidelines to help you communicate effectively.

You should first consider the method of communication to be used. Is the message urgent? Do you want a written record for review and reference by the recipient? How personal should it be? Should you telephone, fax, email, or write a letter to the legislator? How about a face-to-face meeting? Your choice should be determined by the timing and length of the communication as well as your own personal relationship with the legislator.

Personal Meeting

- This is probably the most effective method of communicating, but also requires some careful planning. Remember not to rush into issues before you have made a positive impression.
- Emphasize that you are a constituent from “back home” and recognize that legislators are usually back in their home districts on Fridays when the legislature is not in session. Try to meet at his/her convenience at a restaurant or at your office.
- If you can't arrange a meeting, write a personal letter.

MOA Legislative Conference

January 9, 2006
Capitol Plaza Hotel
Jefferson City, Missouri

Featured This Year

2 Hours Continuing Education
Luncheon Legislative Address
Cinnamon Roll Delivery
Legislative Reception

How to Communicate With Your Legislator (cont.)

Letters

- Use personal or business letterhead with typed or word-processed copy. Sign your name above the typed signature.
- Identify yourself, your position and your subject in the first paragraph. State how this will affect the patients you serve, not yourself or your profession. If writing about legislation, be sure to refer to the title and bill number.
- Be brief and to the point, preferably not more than one page.
- Use your own words; avoid stereotyped phrases and sentences that give the appearance of form letters. Form letters are likely to be ignored or receive form replies.
- The return address should always appear on the letter as well as the envelope. Too often envelopes are thrown away.
- Be constructive. State how the bill could be improved if you disagree with its language or purpose. Be reasonable. Don't ask for the impossible or threaten.
- Be specific and use verifiable facts to support your points. Your own personal experience is your best supporting evidence.
- Thank your legislator if they please you with a vote on an issue. Everyone appreciates a complimentary letter and remembers it.
- Don't become a constant pen pal. Quality rather than quantity is what counts.
- Address the letter correctly:

E-Mail

High tech communication is not necessarily high touch. Your message will be more personal on your own letterhead and signed in your own handwriting, so use that approach first. Save e-mail until you are on a first name basis with your legislator and there is a need for speed in your communication.

Fax

Only slightly more personal than e-mail, a fax is appropriate if there are copies of documents or other photocopied items that must be communicated in a hurry, especially if responding to a request for information. Fax messages should be typed whenever possible.

Telephone

Use the telephone only if you have already established a good relationship with your legislator and know him/her well. It is never a good idea to rely on a telephone call alone. Follow up with a fax or e-mail.

Remember in some cases, the staff is the pipeline to the legislator. Do not neglect that relationship. Write a note of well wishes at the start of each session. Send a thank you note anytime they assist you. They work hard and are rarely thanked. They will remember you for acknowledging them.

AOA Optometry Career Center Helps Displaced O.D.'s

Optometry Career Center (OCC) staff, in cooperation with the affiliated associations in the affected states, is spearheading the effort to help optometrists displaced by hurricane Katrina to find practice opportunities as quickly and easily as possible. To expedite this process, the AOA is waiving all non-member usage fees beginning September 8 through December 9. The career center's staff is also working one-on-one with displaced opportunity seekers to assess individual placement needs and to provide additional assistance as needed.

If you have a practice opportunity to offer (Katrina outreach or otherwise), please register with the OCC and post your listing online at www.optometrycareercenter.org. Displaced opportunity seekers are urged to register online and to contact OCC staff at (800)365-2219, x107 or e-mail OCC@aoa.org. Internet access is not required for assistance.

A special category titled "KATRINA OUTREACH" has also been added for opportunities available to displaced doctors or other optometric professionals. More than 65 opportunities have already been posted under this new category.

In addition, the AOA News will be including a special classified section in print and online for all displaced doctors seeking assistance, and for those offering to provide assistance specifically to individuals affected by the Katrina disaster. These listings are offered free-of-charge. Interested parties may contact OCC staff at (800)365-2219, x107 or e-mail OCC@aoa.org.

Under New Law FDA to Regulate Decorative Contact Lenses as a Medical Device

Washington – November 10, 2005 – Doctors of optometry acknowledged President Bush today for his final approval of a new law to protect Americans from eye injuries due to misuse of "decorative" contact lenses.

An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act for the regulation of all contact lenses as medical devices, and for other purposes was signed into law Wednesday by President Bush, requiring the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate zero power decorative contact lenses as medical devices. This new law means that consumers must now see an eye doctor for all contact lens prescriptions. Previously, decorative contact lenses were unregulated and considered a cosmetic, thus consumers could purchase lenses on the Internet, at retail and convenience stores, flea markets and even gas stations.

Rep. John Boozman (R-Ark.) led the bi-partisan effort to pass S.172 in the U.S. House on Oct. 26 and close a 2 ½-year-old loophole that, in spite of warnings by the nation's eye care providers and federal health officials, has allowed decorative contact lenses to be considered an unregulated cosmetic rather than a regulated medical device. With mounting evidence of grievous harm resulting from unsupervised use of decorative lenses provided to Congress by that American Optometric Association (AOA) and other organizations, the U.S. Senate acted first and approved S. 172 in July with strong support for Senators Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.), Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

AOA 2006 Membership Dues Increase Notice

Effective January, 2006, AOA annual dues will increase from \$611.00 to \$671.00. This amount includes the \$60.00 assessment as passed by the June, 2005 House of Delegates. Membership dues for MOA will remain the same at \$700.00 for calendar year 2006.

Contributions or gifts to the American Optometric Association are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for income tax purposes. However, they may be tax deductible as ordinary and necessary business expenses subject to restrictions imposed as a result of association lobbying activities. The American Optometric Association estimates that the non-deductible portion of your AOA 2006 dues – the portion that is allocable to lobbying – is 6.5%. The non-deductible portion of your MOA 2006 dues allocable to lobbying is 14.5%.

Society Reports

Saint Louis Optometric Society

Jeffrey L. Weaver, O.D.
Thomas J. Cullinane, O.D.

The well-attended St Louis Optometric Society meeting on November 8 featured the MOA presidential visit of Dr. Tom Hobbs. During dinner sponsored by Vistakon, Dr. Jason Street (UMSL Class of 2000) presented the latest on the Oasys™ lens. In an intriguing panel discussion, Representatives Steve Tilley, OD, and Vicki Schneider, and Senators Pat Dougherty and Joan Bray discussed "Advocacy Skills for Patient Care and Clinical Issues." This discussion not only provided SLOS members with one hour of continuing education, but armed potential new keypersons with tips on how to be most effective in their role as an optometry keyperson. Dr. Cullinane facilitated many questions directed at the legislators. Dr. Hobbs then wrapped up the evening with words of encouragement as we redouble our efforts to see a Children's EXAM bill passed in Jefferson City. The next SLOS meeting will be the Holiday Gathering on Tuesday, December 13. Midland will be sponsoring the event that will include the annual trivia contest. As usual, the festivities begin with a social hour at 6:00 PM, and the business meeting at 7:00 PM at the Sheraton Clayton Hotel.

Greater Ozark Optometric Society

Michael C. Frier, O.D.

The GOOS Society is scheduled to meet on November 15th at Mr. Yen's Chinese restaurant with Allergan hosting us and MEI. We will discuss the Children's Vision bill and other hot topics. I expect a large number to attend.

Northwest Optometric Society

G. Ryan Powell, O.D.

The Northwest O.S. met Monday, November 7th at Boudreaux's Restaurant in St. Joe. Billie Bayless of Cooper Vision sponsored the meeting and educated us about the newest Cooper Vision Contact Lens Designs. MOA President Tom Hobbs was also present to discuss the importance of Children's Vision, our legislative efforts and the importance of participation from all of our doctors. Our next meeting will be January 16th at Boudreaux's. We will have CE on oculoplastics by a local Ophthalmologist.

Central Optometric Society

Debbie Hettler-Arbeitman, O.D.

COS has had monthly meetings in September at T.K. Brothers sponsored by Firestone Optics and in October at Grand Cru sponsored by Dr. Andy Moyes. Of course a group of COS members attended the MOA Annual Meeting in Branson in October. Nominations and elections of new COS officers will be held at the November meeting which will be sponsored by Columbia Eye Consultants, Roger Bonham M.D

Southeast Optometric Society

James Hunt, O.D.

The Southeast Optometric Society held their fall meeting at Dexter, Missouri. This meeting was bittersweet because this was Dr. Ken Detring's final SEOS meeting as our MOA Trustee. Dr. Detring is retiring his MOA trustee post after five years of service on the MOA Board. We all want to thank Ken for a great job well done.

Dr. James Hunt accepted the duties as the new MOA trustee at the meeting when he was presented the official MOA Manual. During the meeting Dr. Hunt praised the fine job that Dr. Detring had done and told those in attendance that he had great respect for the dignified job that Ken had done. Dr. Hunt stated that, "I will have a hard job doing as well as Ken did, but with his help and the SEOS Society's help I hope to do half as well as Dr. Detring has done."

Other business at the meeting included a showing of a video about the MOA Convention that was set-up and presented by Dr. Detring. There was also a roundtable discussion about computer backup systems and protecting your computer hard drive from electromagnetic pulses.

Our next meeting will be in Cape Girardeau, Missouri and this will be a special event in November, near the Thanksgiving Holiday. It will be more of a social event with society members and their guests invited to attend. This festive meeting has been planned with the help of several people; with Vice-president, Dr. Kayce Strohmeyer, organizing much of the details. Other officers helping with the details of the November meeting include President Scott McDougal and Secretary/Treasurer Dan Obermark.

Para Report

Para Report, Monica Clay

Spicy Artichoke Dip, Cajun Grilled Chops and Rich Chocolate Brownies...mm'mm. All of these recipes can be found in the 2nd Edition of the Cookbook sold by the Para Board. If you did not pick up a cookbook at convention, please contact your society trustee to purchase your's today. Don't miss your opportunity to have this wonderful and yummy collection of recipes!

With convention behind us, the Para Board is looking forward to the upcoming year. Our first goal is to head into the New Year with a full team. We have found an excellent candidate for the Southeast Society Trustee position. We are still trying to fill the Northeast, Northwest and Kansas City Society Trustee positions. If you or someone you know would be a good fit for any of these positions, please contact Monica (816) 524-8900.

During convention, the Para Board distributed surveys to all Paras in attendance. We are happy to report that 1/3 of those have been returned to us. If you have not already done so, please complete your survey and return it to Tina Heafner. We are looking for both positive feedback and constructive criticism to make the 2006 convention the best yet.

The Board is very excited to be working with our new liaison, Dr. Ryan Powell. Our next meeting will be held Monday, January 9th in Jefferson City. The Para Board will be in attendance and encourages all Paras to attend the activities surrounding the Legislative Conference this January.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

2006

January 9 : MOA Legislative Conference
Jefferson City, MO

January 12-17: Spring CE
Sandals Regency, St. Lucia

January 26-28: AOA Presidents Council
Hyatt Regency, St. Louis, MO

May 1-3: AOA Congressional Congress
JW Marriott, Pennsylvania Ave. , Washington, DC

May 11-13: Midwest Vision
Chicago, IL

June 21-25: AOA Congress
Las Vegas, Nevada

October 5-8: MOA Annual Convention
Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake Ozark, MO

2007

February 15-17: Heart of America

April 23-25: AOA Congressional Congress
JW Marriott, Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC

June 27-July 1: AOA Congress
Boston, Massachusetts

October 3-7: MOA Annual Convention
Ritz Carlton Hotel, St. Louis

2008

February 14-16: Heart of America

June 25-29: AOA Congress
Seattle, Washington

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Send all unsolicited articles, news, and advertising to the MOA Central Office. All opinions and statements of supposed fact in signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Missouri Optometric Association. Deadlines are the first of January, March, May, July, September, and November.