

SECTION EIGHT

WORKING WITH YOUR STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY

In many instances, the state medical society has already developed and implemented an effective mechanism for monitoring and influencing state legislation. Unfortunately, this valuable resource is often overlooked in the race to understand and interact with the state government. The state medical society is generally one of the best sources of information on government activities, as well as a potential ally for your position on medical/public health issues. If the state medical society employs its own lobbyist or staff that deals specifically with government affairs issues, they usually will have, or know where to find, virtually any information you require.

Given the state medical society's resources and the groundwork it has already laid in establishing a state legislative program, it may be advisable to establish a close working relationship with the society. If you or your chapter intend to become a part of the state medical society's legislative monitoring and interaction system, however, it becomes vitally important that you plan an active role in the formulation and implementation of the state medical society's overall government affairs strategy

to ensure that the interests of emergency physicians are represented appropriately.

There are a few specific actions that you should consider in working with your state medical society. You and your chapter should make every effort to get chapter members appointed to the state medical society committee charged with monitoring and responding to state legislative activities. Other actions your chapter may wish to consider include the following.

- Inviting the state medical society lobbyist or chairman of the government affairs/legislative committee to address your chapter's board of directors on a regular basis
- Making frequent calls to the state medical society's lobbyist between formal meetings to stay informed about important state legislative actions. Ideally, this practice will develop a relationship in which the lobbyist will contact you and your chapter when issues develop that are of interest to emergency physicians.
- Providing the state medical society with your chapter's positions on key issues

- Submitting resolutions on pertinent issues to the state medical society

As a final note, you and your chapter should not depend totally on the state medical society. ***The capability for independent action must be developed to prevent situations in which the state medical society does not respond to issues of importance to emergency physicians and their patients.***