

WSSA Advocacy Update

May 29, 2019

In an effort to inform members about our advocacy efforts, we will be posting updates throughout the year on our work in Olympia and D.C. This first update comes on the heels of a legislative session that saw some major law-making that will affect anesthesiologists in Washington. WSSA (along with WSMA and other entities) allocated significant resources to opposing several bills that were ultimately adopted and will pose challenges for anesthesiologists.

- HB 2158 imposes a 20% surcharge on Business and Occupancy (B&O) tax paid by independent physician practices and clinics, while sparing hospital systems from the increase. WSSA opposed this bill as it will disproportionately harm many anesthesiologists and ultimately lead to limited access to care.
- SB 5526 establishes a public option through the Washington Health Benefit Exchange with physician reimbursement rates capped at 160% of Medicare. This is a precedential move for the state to limit reimbursement in a commercial health care plan. WSSA opposed this bill as it will lead to limited ability of physicians to participate in the plan with the current rate setting.
- SB5163 expanded beneficiaries and allowed damages in wrongful death lawsuits. WSSA opposed this bill.
- New IT mandates were imposed on physician practices and healthcare facilities. WSSA opposed this bill as it did not have adequate measures to address the costs of that physicians will incur as a result of the mandates.

WSSA and anesthesiologists in Washington State saw some successes this legislative session.

- HB 1065 protects patients from unexpected bills while requiring insurance carriers to reimburse out-of-network physicians at a commercially reasonable rate, with a physician-friendly dispute resolution process in the event of disagreement.
- HB 1630 proposed to allow naturopaths to prescribe any legend drug or Schedule III through V controlled substance. This bill died in the House Health Care Committee.

Going forward, WSSA will continue to advocate for our state's patients and anesthesiologists. One priority is opposing the Washington Medical Commission's CR-102 proposal for large fee increases for medical license renewal. We will keep you updated as these issues continue to unfold.