

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is pleased to present this issue of *STS Advocacy Monthly*, an e-newsletter with the latest and most important legislative and regulatory news relevant to cardiothoracic surgery. If you have comments or suggestions, please e-mail advocacy@sts.org.

STS Participates in UDI Panel

STS Past President Jeffrey B. Rich, MD spoke in favor of including unique device identifiers (UDIs) on medical claims forms during a June 22 health policy panel briefing for the Democratic caucus hosted by House Minority Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Members of Congress in attendance included the senior-most Democrats on the two Congressional committees with jurisdiction over health care issues: the Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees. The Society has strongly advocated for including UDIs on these forms, noting that capturing such information could enable large-scale analyses of device outcomes and improve patient safety.

Society Comments on MACRA Proposed Rule, CAD Payment Model

Earlier this week, STS [commented on a proposed rule](#) that would implement provisions of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act. Specifically, the rule lays out how various incentive programs and payments for physicians would be structured. The Society is concerned that the incentive programs as outlined are overly complex and would be difficult for providers to follow. STS also feels that the pathway for creating specialty-driven payment models is too complicated to navigate and asks that the final rule address these barriers. In addition to submitting its own comments, the Society signed on to letters from the [Physician Clinical Registry Coalition](#) and [American Medical Association](#) regarding the proposed rule.

The Society also has [submitted comments](#) on a draft white paper from the Health Care Payment Learning & Action Network that outlines a clinical episode-based payment model for coronary artery disease (CAD). The Society noted that while it appreciates the effort to design a model that would help providers coordinate patient care, revisions are necessary to take into account the perspectives of CAD patients, providers, and hospital administrators. STS also requested the opportunity to be more formally involved with the proposal's revision and finalization.

STS Joins Letters on Sunshine Act, Tobacco Regulation, EHRs, Valve Disease

The Society recently signed on to four letters regarding matters that would affect cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients:

- The first letter endorses the Protect Continuing Physician Education and Patient Care Act, a bill that would solidify an important exemption for a broad class of educational materials (journal articles, medical textbooks, etc.) from reporting requirements under the Physician Payments Sunshine Act.
- The second letter urges the Senate to [oppose any amendments to the Agriculture Appropriations Bill](#) that would weaken the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) ability to regulate tobacco products. In May, the FDA issued a final rule enabling the agency to oversee cigars and e-cigarettes, but the House version of the Agriculture Appropriations Bill exempts certain products.

- The third letter [asks Senators to draft legislation](#) that would prohibit electronic health record vendors from intentionally blocking the exchange of information, such as by not adopting the standards required for timely information transfer or charging unreasonable fees to exchange clinical data.
- The final letter requests that the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion recognize a National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day in February, which is National Heart Month.

STS-PAC Update

So far this year, STS-PAC has raised \$91,255 from 230 STS members—slightly behind last year’s fundraising pace—and has disbursed \$74,000 to support allies of cardiothoracic surgery in a bipartisan, bicameral manner. If you haven’t yet made your donation, [please do so now](#).*

Key Contact Connect

Surgeons Visit Capitol Hill

Earlier this month, 16 STS members attended a Legislative Fly-In in Washington, DC. They met with staff from 36 Congressional offices and highlighted issues of importance to the specialty, such as graduate medical education, implementation of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, and funding for congenital heart disease research.

In addition, the Society [presented Congressman Larry Bucshon](#) (R-IN) with the inaugural STS Legislator of the Year award. Dr. Bucshon is a cardiothoracic surgeon and STS member who has shown an unwavering commitment to defend the specialty in the face of significant regulatory challenges. The next Fly-In will take place in October; details will be shared in a future issue of *STS Advocacy Monthly*.



Rep. Larry Bucshon (center, holding plaque) received the Legislator of the Year award.



STS members with Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), third from left.



STS members with Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH), third from left.



STS members with Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY), third from left.

Host a Site Visit

Attending a Fly-In isn't the only way to connect with your lawmakers. Take advantage of the upcoming Congressional recess and host your representative for a tour of your facility. Site visits are an excellent way to help keep your member of Congress informed and engaged in the issues that matter to you. If you're interested, e-mail advocacy@sts.org, and STS staff will help set up the event.

*Contributions to STS-PAC are voluntary and not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. You have the right to decline to contribute without any reprisal against your STS membership. **Your contribution must be made using a credit card, check or money order, and must be drawn on a personal account to be used to support federal candidates. You must be a U.S. citizen or lawfully admitted permanent U.S. resident to contribute.** Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of each individual whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year. Federal law prohibits STS and STS-PAC from soliciting contributions from persons outside STS's restricted class. STS's restricted class includes individuals who are dues paying members or non-dues paying members with voting rights, and who are U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent U.S. residents.