

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](mailto:advocacy@sts.org).

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### **STS Nominates Jeffrey Rich to MedPAC**

The Society [recently nominated STS Past President Jeffrey B. Rich, MD](#) for appointment to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), an independent congressional agency that provides Congress with analysis and policy advice on the Medicare program. Several members of Congress sent letters in support of Dr. Rich's nomination, including Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA), Rep. Larry Bucshon (R-IN), Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-VA), and Rep. Scott Rigell (R-VA). Support letters on Dr. Rich's behalf also were submitted by the American College of Cardiology, the Partnership to Improve Patient Care, the American College of Surgeons, and a coalition of surgical specialties. If appointed, Dr. Rich would join MedPAC starting May 1.

### **Society Comments on Quality Measures, Claims Data, Heart Allocation**

STS recently submitted comment letters on four matters affecting cardiothoracic surgeons:

- The first letter was to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and [provided input on a draft quality Measure Development Plan](#).
- The second letter, also to CMS, reiterated the Society's stance that clinical registries like the STS National Database [need broader access to Medicare claims data](#) than what currently is available. STS also signed onto a [Physician Clinical Registry Coalition letter](#) on the topic.
- The third letter was to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) about [proposed changes to the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network/UNOS Adult Heart Allocation System](#). Although the Society applauded efforts to update the system, it pointed out a number of areas in the proposal that need further consideration. The UNOS recommendations of particular interest to the Society focused on stratification of the most medically urgent heart transplant candidates, the increased use of mechanical circulatory support devices, and geographic disparities in access to donors among heart transplant candidates.
- The fourth letter [congratulated Robert M. Califf, MD](#) on his recent appointment to lead the Food and Drug Administration. The Society supported Dr. Califf's nomination last year in a letter to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Dr. Califf, a cardiologist, led the effort to establish a national postmarket medical device surveillance system that includes unique device identifiers—an issue for which STS has strongly advocated in the past.

### **STS Weighs In on FY2017 Funding**

The Society recently joined several coalition letters advocating for provisions in the fiscal year 2017 federal budget.

- A [letter to the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees](#) supported the allocation of \$10 million to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and \$34.5 billion to the National Institutes of Health for congenital heart disease research and surveillance.
- Letters to [House](#) and [Senate](#) leadership encouraged Congress to approve \$364 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, restoring \$30 million that was cut from the agency's budget last year.

### ***Key Contact Connect***

#### **Next Legislative Fly-In Scheduled for June**

When lawmakers sit down with physicians from their home districts, they listen. Plan to participate in the next [STS Legislative Fly-In](#), June 13-14 in Washington, DC. After a dinner briefing the evening of June 13, participants will meet with lawmakers on Capitol Hill the next day. [Watch a short video](#) from STS Immediate Past President Mark S. Allen, MD explaining what happens during a Fly-In, and register by e-mailing [jkrantz@sts.org](mailto:jkrantz@sts.org).