

Policy Update

ASN Hill Day 2011

By Daniel Kochis and Rachel Shaffer

Sixteen American Society of Nephrology (ASN) leaders, members of the ASN Council, Public Policy Board, and Board of Advisors, plus seven ASN staff members participated in the first annual ASN Hill Day on May 5, 2011. Through these efforts they helped raise awareness of the growing public health threat of kidney disease and encouraged support among lawmakers for ASN's policy priorities.

In more than 50 meetings with congressional leaders from both parties, ASN raised general awareness of kidney disease, which afflicts one in nine Ameri-

cans. While kidney disease is a serious public health concern, it is not as well known by policymakers as other chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

Public Policy Board Chair Thomas Hostetter, MD, found support for ASN's policy priorities on both sides of the aisle.

"Kidney disease is not a partisan issue," echoed ASN President Joseph Bonventre, MD, PhD, FASN. "I met with congressional offices representing both parties and found strong support for the issues we care about across the board, most importantly maintaining funding for

medical research. We are very pleased with the conversations we had on Hill Day and look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationships with congressional representatives and their staff members."

ASN members discussed the society's public policy priorities: support for robust, sustained funding for medical research, lifetime immunosuppressive drug coverage for transplant recipients, and access to high-quality care for kidney patients in new care delivery models. ASN members also discussed the top priorities of erasing health disparities in



U.S. Capitol Building.



ASN Board of Advisors members Christine Abrass (left) and Charles Alpers (middle) speak with the office of Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA).



(left to right) Chair of the ASN Public Policy Board, Thomas Hostetter, MD, FASN; Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA); and ASN Director of Policy and Public Affairs Paul Smedberg.



ASN Councilor Raymond Harris, MD, FASN, and Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN).

kidney disease care and addressing the nephrology workforce crisis.

According to Public Policy board member William Harmon, MD, “Many people we met with were amazed at how many people in their own states are afflicted with kidney disease. Patients on dialysis represent just the tip of the iceberg, and it’s crucial that ASN helps educate congressional representatives and their staff members about the huge number of patients with kidney disease.”

Building upon the success of the first ASN Hill Day, the society has scheduled follow-up meetings with several mem-

bers of Congress and their staff members, including visits to research labs and dialysis facilities. “Witnessing research firsthand in the states they represent is an eye-opening experience for members of Congress, and one that I’m happy to say ASN has helped facilitate,” said Councilor Sharon Moe, MD, FASN.

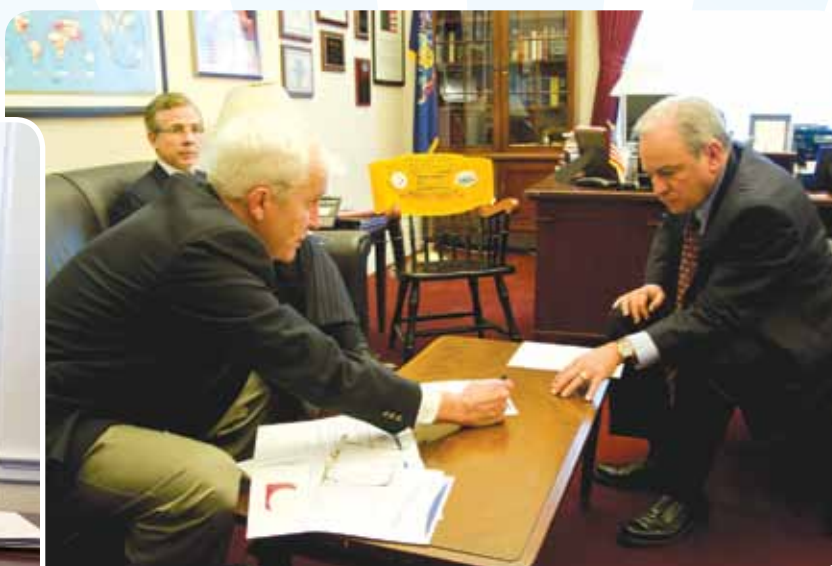
In addition to congressional visits by ASN leadership, ASN members took part in Hill Day 2011 by sending electronic letters to their representatives urging support for ASN’s policy priorities. “The support of all ASN members is critical to the success of our advocacy efforts,”

said Councilor Ronald Falk MD, FASN. “This outreach reaffirms the important messages we brought to Congress on Hill Day 2011 and helps ASN connect with representatives from offices that we were unable to visit on Hill Day.

To learn more about how ASN is leading the fight to bring kidney disease to the forefront of the legislative agenda, about ASN Hill Day 2011, ASN’s public policy priorities, or ASN’s advocacy efforts in general, please visit the Hill Day 2011 webpage: http://www.asn-online.org/policy_and_public_affairs/hill-day2011.aspx. ●



ASN Councilor Ronald Falk, MD, FASN, speaks with the office of Rep. David Price (D-NC).



(left to right) Chair of the ASN Public Policy Board, Thomas Hostetter, MD; ASN Director of Policy and Public Affairs Paul Smedberg; and Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA).



(left to right) ASN Policy Analyst Daniel Kochis, Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN), and ASN Councilor Raymond Harris, MD, FASN.



Some ASN Hill Day participants congregate in front of the U.S. Capitol at midday.