



## RIMS working to amplify the voice of health care in RI

The Medical Society and RIMPAC strongly encourage physicians to become engaged in the political process at the highest level they find supportable and appropriate for them personally, whether simply by contributing to RIMPAC, AMPAC and specialty PACs, or involving themselves actively in support of a candidate, or actually running for public office themselves.

This is the essence of the professional obligation articulated in Principle VII of the AMA's *Principles of Medical Ethics*: "A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health."

And, of course, all physicians and their families should be informed voters in the primary elections (September 14) and the general elections (November 2). The health care professionals who currently serve in the General Assembly have proven to be highly committed and effective legislators.

Representative Arthur Corvese, an optometrist; Representative Peter Ginaitt, a registered nurse and EMT; Representative Roger Picard, a social worker; Senator Leo Blais, a pharmacist; and Senator Joseph Polisena, a registered nurse and former EMT, have all played immensely helpful roles in promoting enlightened public policy at the State House over the years, based upon their superior knowledge and understanding health care.

All of these incumbents are running for reelection. Helping them return to office and sending them additional reinforcements are top priorities of RIMPAC this fall.

### Physician activism part of a Rhode Island trend

In the general elections of 2002, 42% of seats in the Rhode Island General Assembly were uncontested. This year, 22% are uncontested.

In part, this change reflects the fact that more Republicans and Independents have filed to challenge some of the Democrats, who currently hold 84% of Assembly seats, giving Rhode Island the nation's most lopsided legislature. (Idaho is second, with a legislature that is almost as overwhelmingly Republican as Rhode Island's is Democratic.)

Governor Carcieri personally recruited some of this year's Republican candidates, and he remains committed to "party building."

Most of this year's physician candidates have chosen to run as Democrats, for strategic as much as for ideological reasons, in some cases. The fact remains that in Rhode Island, party affiliation does not necessarily reflect ideology. Some of the most socially conservative members of the General Assembly are Democrats, and Rhode Island Republicans, like their brethren throughout the Northeast, tend to be moderates or centrists.

### The long campaign trail

All of the candidates named above have already put enormous effort into their races and cleared several hurdles, including the formalities of filing, gathering signatures, meeting various deadlines, and conferring with party powerbrokers.

A visit to their websites shows that they all have well articulated views not only on health care, but on the whole range of issues that Rhode Islanders care about, including highway safety, schools, public transportation, gambling casinos, taxes, affordable housing and the full gamut of local issues. Such breadth is one key to political success.

Another key is money. The Rhode Island Medical Political Action Committee (RIMPAC), Chaired by Dr. L. Anthony Cirillo, offered "scholarships" to graduates of the RIMS Campaign School. RIMPAC and other state medical specialty PACs are providing other campaign support to friends of medicine.

Physicians and their families are encouraged to contact these campaigns and offer whatever support is needed. All of the candidates face difficult races, and all of the House candidates must survive the September 14 primaries.

## RIMPAC

### RIMPAC's goal: "40 in '04"

RIMPAC Chair Dr. Anthony Cirillo set an ambitious goal at the beginning of this year: "40 in '04," i.e. raising forty thousand dollars to support friends of medicine in the 2004 election campaigns. As of August 1, RIMPAC had achieved about 75% of that goal.

In addition to providing important support to RIMPAC and several medical specialty PACs, several physicians have been commendably active in organizing and hosting special events to support key office holders.