

The road ahead

National health system reform will remain a work in progress for at least several more years. The official timeline set forth in the bill itself for implementation stretches through 2019. Much has yet to be codified in regulation, and a good deal of responsibility and discretion for the ultimate shape of health reform is left to the individual states.

These realities constitute a challenge to doctors, medical societies and the AMA to be vigilant, organized and engaged, now and for years to come.

For news and information on health system reform, visit the AMA's special site www.hsreform.org. For state advocacy and public policy information visit www.ama-assn.org/go/arc, the site for the AMA's Advocacy Resource Center (ARC). ❖



AMA National Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC, March 2010

Gary Bubby, MD, RIMS President-Elect; J. James Rohack, MD, then-President of the AMA; and Vera A. De Palo, MD, RIMS President

AMA House of Delegates: Chicago, June 12–15, 2010

While strong and diverse opinions persist within the AMA House over national health system reform and the AMA's posture in the long process to date, the actual voting at this year's Annual Meeting, held in Chicago, June 12–15, amounted to a solid affirmation of recent AMA positions and actions – even more so than was true at the Interim Meeting last November, where a trend toward consolidation and consensus was already evident.

At the heart of this more subdued and sober mood in the House seemed to be a pragmatic sense that the world has changed, that we need to move forward from where we are, and that where we are is in many ways better for our patients than where we were before March 23. In addition, there was a largely unspoken realization that the AMA's careful navigation over the past eighteen months had succeeded in preserving a positive public image for doctors this time around, in contrast, say, to 1964–65.

Cecil B. Wilson, MD, an internist from Winter Park, Florida, was inaugurated President of the AMA at this meeting; and Peter W. Carmel, MD, a pediatric neurosurgeon from Newark, New Jersey, was chosen President-Elect. Dr. Carmel had two strong competitors in the election, one of whom was a New Englander, Dr. Joe Heyman, an obstetrician-gynecologist in solo practice

in Amesbury, MA, whom we have known for many years through his long participation and leadership in the New England Delegation.

Governance continues to be an unsettled discussion for the AMA House, in the sense that two-thirds the 500+ Delegates favor continuing with two big, policy-making meetings a year, but 52% think the interim meeting should be combined with another regularly occurring AMA meeting, most likely the National Advocacy Conference, which currently takes place in March.

As always, the scope of AMA House business, as well as the thoroughness, efficiency and openness with which the House accomplishes its enormous work, represent an impressive model of democratic process. The entire handbook for the June 2010 meeting (resolutions, council reports, reference committee reports, etc.) is publicly available online (www.ama-assn.org), as is a preliminary agenda for the Interim Meeting, which is coming up in early November.

At this past June meeting, RIMS' Executive Director Newell Warde was reelected by his state medical society peers to another two-year term on the Executive Committee of the AMA Litigation Center. The Center's Executive Committee subsequently elected him Chair. ❖