



POLITICS / GOVERNMENT / LEGISLATION

Kicking Off a Big Advocacy Year for Acupuncture

DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Editor's Note: Article submitted by the ASA and NCCAOM Advocacy Team

Together, the American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) and the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) are leading the profession's effort to help U.S. Representative Judy Chu (D-Calif.) advance H.R. 4803, the Acupuncture for our Seniors Act through Congress. H.R. 4803 would establish acupuncturists as Medicare providers, removing both supervision and incident-to billing restrictions that Medicare currently requires of acupuncturists.

Since its July 2021 introduction, the ASA and the NCCAOM have promoted H.R. 4803 by educating the profession, policymakers and the public on how the bill will increase access to acupuncturists. In doing so, the ASA and the NCCAOM ultimately seek to position the bill for success by securing bipartisan congressional support for H.R. 4803.

Bipartisan Support in Congress is an Absolute Necessity



Bipartisan support is critical to any bill's success. Without ample support from both Democratic and Republican members of Congress, the likelihood of a bill advancing through committee processes and receiving serious consideration is low.

Currently, H.R. 4803 only has Democratic co-sponsors. For the bill to receive consideration, H.R. 4803 needs to obtain a Republican champion before the bill becomes too imbalanced.

Increasing access to acupuncture is not a politically divisive issue. The current congressional climate, unfortunately, is one of contention and distrust. More so than ever, a bill with a long list of Democratic co-sponsors will deter Republicans from lending their support (and vice versa).

Per the ASA / NCCAOM [Medicare Roadmap](#), securing bipartisan support for H.R. 4803 must take place *before* engaging all members of Congress. The ASA and NCCAOM's current congressional focus is narrow – for now. Steps taken to obtain Republican support now is the highest priority and critical to helping the effort during the rest of the 117th Congress (through 2022) and into the 118th Congress (2023-2024).

Setting a Pace to Meet the Long-Term Goal

Advancing any bill through Congress is a marathon, not a sprint. The advocacy effort behind H.R. 4803 needs to be timely, deliberate and purposeful. Most successful bills take several attempts over the course of years before they become law. These bills succeed with time – and with an informed, measured and united voice from their advocates.

The strategic and undivided work the profession does *now* is critical to this bill's success in obtaining bipartisan support. For H.R. 4803, that means focusing and engaging as many acupuncturists as possible in this singular strategy.

Linking H.R. 4803 with the Future of the Acupuncture Profession

Obtaining Medicare-provider status is critical to the profession. As the Medicare program continues to embrace integrative medicine, it will likely cover more acupuncture services. Without this status, however, the current Medicare restrictions will inhibit acupuncturists from prospering from these opportunities. Instead, those already with Medicare-provider status (e.g., physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants), but with far less acupuncture training and experience, will step in to provide these services—and displace acupuncturists.

Answering the Call: Acupuncturists in Key Congressional Districts Play a Critical Role

It is important to be strategic in advocating for this bill. The ASA and the NCCAOM will soon call upon acupuncturists in Republican congressional districts to join the ASA / NCCAOM in meetings with their U.S. Representatives. Acupuncturists who participate will work closely with the ASA / NCCAOM advocacy team to prepare for these meetings – all that is necessary is a willingness to help.

Join the ASA-NCCAOM Town Hall on Feb. 9

Regardless of congressional district, there are many ways for members of the profession to be effective advocates for H.R. 4803. The ASA and the NCCAOM have several committees and task forces focused on advocacy efforts. The ASA and the NCCAOM will host a Town Hall on Wednesday, February 9th, to update the profession on the current advocacy strategy around H.R. 4803, provide more information on opportunities to get involved with ASA / NCCAOM [advocacy efforts](#), and drum up support for H.R. 4803 in 2022.

Look for registration information soon regarding the ASA / NCCAOM Town Hall; and in the meantime, contact the ASA and the NCCAOM advocacy team with any questions: advocacy@asacu.org or advocacy@thenccaom.org.

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