

Letter from the ArPTA President: February Edition

It has been a very cold month in Arkansas. Many of our members (and some of our Board members) were without power for about a week after the ice storm. I hope and pray that everyone is back to normal and there were not too many sad stories around the State. Even though there were cold times and some hardship, the ArPTA, and your elected and appointed representative volunteers have been working hard through this month. I think this is a great time to catch on what has been happening.

First, as you all probably know, this is a year of legislative session for Arkansas. There are many bills coming forward concerning PT and we have been very active in trying to make sure only the best scenarios unfold for the PT profession through the actions of the legislators. If you need any specific information on anything going on, please feel free to contact Bradley Phillips (our Executive Director), Nancy Reese or Bill Bandy (our Legislative Committee co-Chairs), or myself. We have at least four actions we are following closely and have met with parties on all of these issues. You can individually follow the bills presented and the actions of the bills through the following web site: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2009/R/Pages/Home.aspx>.

The major action concerning physical therapy is that the PT Licensure Board is bringing legislation to update our practice act. The primary elements of this action include allowing emergency provision of therapy services, protection of elements of our practice, and cleaning up language in the different sections of our Act. Though the ArPTA is not the sponsor of this bill, I have met personally with the Arkansas Medical Society (AMS) to get them to support this proposed legislation from the Board and we are having good and substantive dialog. We have also met with some orthopedic surgeons from the region where our legislative sponsor lives to insure no opposition to this bill when drafted and presented. Only time will tell how this bill will be received when presented, but we know the Chiropractic groups will oppose the protection of the word "physiotherapy" and some other provisions and we hope to clean up language to get support of the AMS. We will need your help in this process, and you will be asked to talk to your legislator when the bill is drafted and presented.

The other bills brought so far to the legislature include two massage therapy bills, a bill to allow physicians to delegate performance of simple procedures to employees, and the hint of another chiropractic bill to allow them to do some things we would consider a part of physical therapy. The massage therapy bill (SB 89) has taken the majority of our action to date and we are strongly opposed, however, another bill has been presented that would move the Massage Therapy Board under the Department of Health (HB 1162) and this has our full support. We understand, through our lobbyist (Bill Phillips), the action to take the Massage Therapy Board to the Department of Health has the most support from the Legislature and we will continue to push for this through the session. The physician's bill (SB 239) to authorize delegation of simple procedures has been presented to APTA and they are concerned of some of the language and we are meeting with the AMS to smooth out the language and give us assurance this will not effect the provision of PT services to the public. The Chiropractic bill has not shown up in Committee yet and we will be there to oppose this when it does show.

Second, your Board of Directors of the ArPTA met this month to strategically plan our next two years. We will be bringing more to you in the future, but some of our changes and plans are bulleted below:

- We are planning to update and improve the Web page with new features and more interesting content
- We are planning ways to increase non-dues revenue to give us more money to work with
- We will be planning our meeting farther in advance to allow you to mark your calendar and make sure you can network with your colleagues around the State
- We are planning to give all members a better “bang for their buck” with increased services to members, better communication, and more educational offerings in your geographical area at minimal cost
- We are setting up a network to help with reimbursement policy and with individual member concerns with third party payers

Finally, your Board is dedicated to meeting your individual needs as a member. We have an ongoing incident that we are working on and would like to share this with our membership. A physician in Arkansas has decided to file a complaint against a physical therapist, specialized and certified in electrodiagnostics, working in Arkansas. We heard a rumor of this coming and contacted the physical therapists in Arkansas that are certified specialists in this area. When the action finally came, we found the therapist being brought to the Board actually lived in Louisiana and was not a member of our Association. I contacted this individual and supported him through literature but told him we could do so much more if he was a member. Within 20 minutes, he joined the APTA. Since then, he has had infinite support (his own words) from the ArPTA and the APTA and feels well prepared for his upcoming PT Licensure Board hearing. I will be there along with Bill Bandy (representing the APTA BOD) to support this individual, even though he is not our Component constituent. We are sure this will be resolved for the best for all physical therapists in the State, but also be assured that we will be there every step of the way with material support of whatever is needed. The American Medical Society is not in support or the action against this PT and we have their support in this matter. We will keep you informed of our activities and the outcome of this matter (the meeting will be on February 5th at 10:00 at the Arkansas Board of PT offices).

Please keep informed during these next few months by going to our website and by accessing the Arkansas 87th General Assembly website mentioned above. We will have a very active legislative session and expect only positive outcomes for all PTs.

Submitted 2/2/09: Steven W. Forbush, ArPTA President