



Council on Public Policy

The Council on Public Policy is one of five councils of ASHP that serve to advise and develop professional policy positions for consideration by the ASHP House of Delegates and the Board of Directors. Each year six students are selected to serve a one year appointment on one of the five councils and the Commission on Affiliate Relations. The primary focus of my council is to develop policy positions related to laws, regulations, and other health policy activities that have an impact on the practice of pharmacy in hospitals and health systems. Within the Council's purview are: (1) federal laws and regulations; (2) state laws and regulations; (3) analysis of public policy proposals that are designed to address important health issues; (4) professional liability as defined by the courts; and (5) other related matters.

According to current ASHP President Lynnae Mahaney, policy positions serve four basic functions: (1) To promote or champion the pharmacist's role in a particular situation or issue; (2) to communicate ASHP's position on a particular issue with legislative bodies, governmental agencies, consulting firms, pharmaceutical manufacturers, academia, other health care professions and associations; (3) to promote and enhance the evolution of the profession; and (4) to promote and enhance the public's health.

My appointment started over the summer with the development of my council's policy week agenda and webinars orienting members to TeamSpace and policy week. For the first time ASHP decided this year to do its part to help preserve the environment by going paperless. TeamSpace allowed all of the councils to communicate and post documents prior to and during policy week. It will also serve as a communication tool throughout the year as our policies move forward through the ASHP Board of Directors and House of Delegates.

In September, all five councils and the commission on affiliate relations convened in Bethesda, Maryland, for policy week. The first two days consisted of working through the agenda that was set over the summer by ASHP general members, council members, and ASHP staff. I was asked to contribute and led discussions on two of our agenda items. Truthfully, as a student this seemed to be a daunting task for me at first; however all of the council members were very receptive to my comments and questions. The final day of policy week was completed with a trip to Capitol Hill to advocate for our profession. As all of you know, this is an important time in health care reform legislation and never has it been so important for pharmacists' voices to be heard. I spent the day meeting with Congressional

representatives or their staff members from my state discussing the current House/Senate health care reform bills and amendments, which include MTM grant programs. We also asked for support in restoring PGY2 residency funding through CMS and expansion of loan forgiveness programs for pharmacists who agree to practice in underserved areas after graduation -- issues that are very important to students!!!. This was the most exciting part of my week because the democratic process, while slow and complex, still astonishes me.

The week was not all business. The schedule was built for time to play and network. I really enjoyed spending time with the other students on other councils and meeting the student forum executive committee. Policy week is not only a leadership opportunity, but also a very important networking avenue. The councils are made up of leaders in the pharmacy profession with widely differing scopes of practice, areas of expertise, experience, and backgrounds.

Policy week was an invaluable experience in terms of expanding my education, leadership, and networking abilities. I can't even begin to describe how thankful I am for the wonderful opportunity to serve on a council. I would highly recommend that all students seek out a similar opportunity.