

# Tapping Our Legislative Influence

[Save to myBoK](#)

*by Dan Rode, MBA, FHFMA*

Beyond the endless speculation about how the recent federal election will affect Congress' lawmaking abilities, the narrow margins of victory illustrated an important point: individual votes have power. The 436 elected officials in Washington, DC, recognize this. This is AHIMA's-and your-chance to make some changes.

## Making the Capitol Connection

Today, more than ever, your elected officials at the national and state levels need and want your input. In recent months, state associations have achieved significant legislative action through individual and group work with state legislators and other associations with whom they have joined forces. At the same time, we have also seen what can happen when we are not vigilant and legislation or regulation goes forward without our input and results in a less than appropriate law.

Few regulators understand health information management, but many are willing to listen and to incorporate professional positions and best practices into regulation. Granted, not all regulators are open to input, and the result can be disappointing. But these circumstances can be changed over time.

The AHIMA policy and government relations (P&GR) team works in several capacities in the Association and with the federal government to see that new and changed legislation and regulations fit within AHIMA's policies, principles, and best practices. Together with state association leaders, we have written welcome messages to all new and returning members of Congress and their staffs. These letters explain what AHIMA is, how AHIMA members contribute to the healthcare industry, and goals for legislation.

To assist members of Congress, we offered to provide insight into the HIM environment, our profession, and the issues we deal with that surface in the legislative arena. Although AHIMA does not have a political action committee, we have a 70-plus year history of professionalism and political neutrality that makes our insight, experience, and opinion widely valued.

## AHIMA's Advocacy Tools

In the next few months, members of the P&GR team will be meeting with the new Congressional leadership and those appointed by the new administration that oversee agencies affecting the healthcare industry and HIM profession. When needed, the P&GR team will be calling on volunteer leaders in state associations. While the P&GR team has been very successful during its time in Washington, many times its success relies on uniting HIM professionals in the front lines with the members of Congress or the administration who are looking for professional input.

Besides our welcome letters and meetings, state associations and AHIMA specialty group leaders have planned the annual expedition to Capitol Hill for May 16. After a kick-off breakfast, AHIMA members will visit and educate their congressional delegates. These meetings will highlight our issues, and more importantly remind the members of Congress who we are, that our votes make a difference, and that one of their constituents back home might be able to shed light on a healthcare issue or a privacy concern. We hope you'll join us. If you can't, consider a visit on your own or a letter to your representative or senator.

Later in 2001, the P&GR team will also unveil a new advocacy tool box. We are building this tool box to help you, your state association, and your specialty group to work individually and with the P&GR team to make our laws and regulations fit our needs. This year, the P&GR team will also be initiating a state watch system, which will allow state association leaders to monitor the legislative and potential regulatory actions within their state via the AHIMA Web site. While AHIMA staff will not be involved with state issues, we hope that this information, along with the tool box, will encourage state associations to participate in the legislative process locally.

The P&GR team works with several AHIMA committees, especially the Advocacy and Policy and the Coding Practice and Standards committees, to determine the Association's issues and priorities. We welcome your input to these committee leaders as well as our staff.

Grass-roots efforts made a difference in this last election and will continue to do so in the future. We welcome your involvement in AHIMA's state and national grass-roots efforts.

**Dan Rode** ([dan.rode@ahima.org](mailto:dan.rode@ahima.org)) is AHIMA's vice president of policy and government relations.

---

**Article citation:**

Rode, Dan. "Tapping Our Legislative Influence." *Journal of AHIMA* 72, no.4 (2001): 16-17.

---

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.