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ADPAC and You



By Michelle Szewczyk, DDS
MDA Trustee and District 9 ADPAC
Board Member

Editor's Note: The following Advocacy Avenue article is adapted from an interview with MDA Trustee and District 9 ADPAC Board Member Michelle Szewczyk.

Michelle Szewczyk is originally from Troy, Michigan, where she currently practices with a group. She is a proud Polish-American daughter of two immigrants. She enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as cooking and traveling. She has been an avid supporter of organized dentistry since dental school.

Why did you decide to become involved with organized dentistry?

My initial involvement in organized dentistry began my first year in dental school when an upperclassman who chaired ASDA's legislative affairs committee approached me. She thought I would be a good fit for her position. Thanks to her mentorship I was able to assume her position the following year. It has been said that the minute you start a leadership position your first goal should be to find your replacement. This leadership message had a powerful impact on my own involvement in organized dentistry.

I attended ADA/ASDA lobby day as a dental student. This connected me with leaders at the MDA and ADA who inspired me to work with ADPAC in the summer of 2019. During my ADPAC fellowship in Washington, D.C., I was able to see firsthand how organized dentistry advocacy works on a national level. I have remained involved in donating to ADPAC and feel privileged to serve as your new ADPAC board member. I hope to use my positions as District 9 ADPAC Chair and MDA Trustee

to continue this legacy of encouraging others to be leaders by helping them develop confidence in themselves and their capabilities to serve in leadership roles.

What is your current role in organized dentistry?

I currently serve at all three levels of the tripartite. I am a general council member of the Oakland County Dental Society, a member of the Board of Trustees for the Michigan Dental Association (MDA), and your American Dental Political Action Committee (ADPAC) board member for District 9, which represents Michigan and Wisconsin.

Why is advocacy important?

The MDA and ADA invest a great deal of manpower and finance to bring value to the membership in the form of advocacy. This is critical, as dentists' collective interests are represented by the MDA/ADA. Regardless of where a dentist works (solo, group, private, corporate), these advocacy efforts have a direct impact on their profession. Whether insurance reform, state regulation on dental equipment, or the licensure requirements imposed by the state government, organized dentistry keeps track of legislative developments and how they affect dentists. The MDA and ADA lobby on behalf of dentists' best interest and work with policy makers to craft legislation in the best interest of community oral health. In my opinion, advocacy is a little known asset of the MDA. Many dentists do not fully understand the legislative process and the importance of having a seat at the table. During my term as ADPAC Board Member and Trustee, I hope members can gain a greater appreciation for dentist involvement in government affairs.

What is ADPAC exactly?

The American Dental Political Action Committee (ADPAC) is the political arm of the American Dental Association. Its mission is to educate dentists about the importance of political action and to help elect candidates for congressional office who understand and are supportive of issues of importance to dentists and their patients. ADPAC provides financial assistance on a bipartisan basis to congressional incumbents and candidates for office. It oversees a grassroots network of activist dentists, provides political education opportunities for member dentists, works closely with state dental political action committees, and encourages dentists to participate in an array of political campaigns

and activities. Dentists who run for office and have a viable chance of election are supported financially. While not a lobbying organization, ADPAC's focus on political action and involvement complements the legislative efforts of the Association on the national level through coordination with the ADA Council on Government Affairs and the ADA Leadership. ADPAC focuses on the federal level election while MDPAC focuses on the state level.

What are the current ADPAC priorities?

Lobby day is ADPAC's biggest event of the year. It brings together dentists and dental students from around the country to Washington, D.C. to meet with their congressional representatives and advocate for issues affecting dentistry. Lobby Day creates a space for attendees to engage with political analysts and subject matter experts who are working with Congress and other federal officials to represent our profession.

The ADPAC priorities at this year's Lobby Day included:

- **DOC Access:** The Dental and Optometric Care Access Act (S. 1424/H.R. 1385) seeks to prevent dental and vision plans from dictating fees for services not covered by insurance, addressing federal loopholes and enhancing patient and provider protections against insurance plan overreach.
- **Student Debt Issues:** H.R. 1202/S. 704 (the REDI Act) and H.R. 7814/S. 2172 (the Dental Loan Repayment Assistance Act), legislation aimed at easing the financial burden of educational debt for dental and medical residents and dental faculty through deferred interest and tax-exempt loan repayment assistance.
- **Workforce:** S.2891, the Action for Dental Health Act of 2023, addresses workforce shortages and enhances access to dental care by funding workforce training, expanding dental services to underserved areas, and supporting oral health education initiatives.

This year's Lobby Day was the most successful year yet! There were 1,200 attendees for Lobby Day, making this the largest Lobby Day the ADA has ever had.

How can members contribute?

Donate: adpac.ada.org

Donate: Text "ADPAC" to 345345 and follow the link. You will need your ADA number.

Donate at the QR Code:



Do you have any final thoughts for readers?

The primary duty of each ADPAC Board member is to increase dentist participation and financial support of ADPAC. Participation can range from attending MDA grassroots advocacy events to attending Lobby Day in Washington, D.C., and contributing on your dues statement. All forms of participation and financial support are investments in the profession we know and love.

A famous saying in Washington, D.C. is "if you are not at the table, then you're probably on the menu." In other words, if you aren't participating in the conversation, there is a high likelihood that others are deciding for you and an even higher likelihood that those decisions won't be to your benefit. Dentists need to stay involved in our government to help protect our patients, providers, and profession.

Thank you for your time and your contributions.