A Pediatrician in the Legislature Makes A Big Difference

Richard Pan, MD, MPH, FAAP; Assemblymember

When I served on my AAP Chapter Board, my chapter identified advocacy as being the top priority for the Chapter. Later, as AAP-CA District IX Vice-Chair, I conducted a membership survey for the District strategic plan, and again, advocacy for children and pediatricians was the top priority. Members wanted the AAP to influence state policy.

Despite this desire, limited resources made it difficult for the California AAP to generally do more than respond to proposed legislation. Sponsoring even one bill would take up almost all of our resources. But that changed in 2010 when I was the first pediatrician elected to serve in the California legislature.

On entering the Assembly, I authored several AAP-CA sponsored or supported bills that were signed into law. In my first year, I authored the CCS managed care carve-out extension, addition of Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) to the newborn screen, and a ban on the sale of expired baby food and formula and OTC medication. I authored AB2109 to require parents consult a physician or other health care professional before exempting their children for required immunizations at school entry. This bill made international news as anti-vaccine celebrities attacked me and raised money for my 2012 election opponent.

As Chair of the Health Committee, I have fought to roll-back Medi-Cal cuts and to maintain the Medi-Cal primary care payment "bump" at Medicare rates. I have chaired numerous oversight hearings on quality and fraud in the Medi-Cal program. I authored legislation this year to continue a Children's Advisory Board to ensure pediatric input to the Medi-Cal program.

In addition, I also stopped or amended bills that were contrary to evidence-based practice or undermined medical practice such as a bill to mandate vision tests for children that the AAP-CA has determined to be of minimal benefit and would be a significant burden to families and taxpayers. As the only physician in the legislature, my views on health carry particular weight with my colleagues.

There is still much more I need to do for children and pediatrics, and because of term limits, I am running for the State Senate this year. The CCS managed care carve-out will end in 2015, and the administration has stated they will oppose a further extension. I have established a workgroup to ensure children with special needs will have access to pediatric subspecialists and surgical specialists and to maintain the CCS standards. This effort will cease if I am not elected, and CCS will then almost certainly be rolled into Medi-Cal managed care plans. I also convened the first meeting in many years between school districts and the Medi-Cal program to begin work on increasing federal matching funds to support school health services.

I am in a very competitive election this November. My opponent is a trial attorney who opposes MICRA (The Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act) without which medical liability premiums will at least double, and supports greatly expanding the scope of practice of NPs and other non-physicians. He advocated taking away physician due process rights with the Medical Board, and he declined to oppose cuts to Medi-Cal reimbursement rates.

You can make a difference this November and for years to come. I need the support or pediatricians across California if I am to continue to serve. Please visit my website, www.drrichardpan.com today to help.

Note from Kris Calvin, CEO AAP-CA: This article is authored personally by Dr. Pan and represents his views. However, Dr. Pan's candidacy for Senate is also formally endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), a legal 501©4 coalition of the four CA AAP Chapters that can support and fundraise for candidates. (No Chapter dues are used in that effort—it is your individual contributions that make the difference.) AAP-CA encourages you to go to www.drrichardpan.com to learn more about Dr. Pan and his candidacy.