



Legislative and Regulatory Update

HOPE Act

The HIV Organ Policy Equity Act (HOPE) Act passed the House of Representatives on Tuesday, November 12. It had already passed the Senate in June and now goes to President Obama for his signature. The HOPE Act reverses the current legal ban, enacted in 1988, on the use of HIV-positive organs for HIV-positive individuals in need of a donor organ. It was sponsored by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA), and attracted a bipartisan group of 14 cosponsors in the Senate and 153 in the House. Prior to the vote, Rep. Dr. Michael C. Burgess (R-TX) spoke in support of the bill and mentioned his conversations with members of ASTS as one of the reasons for his support. ASTS worked for the passage of this bill along with the American Society of Nephrology, HIV Medicine Association, and the American Society of Transplantation.

SGR Fix

Earlier this month, the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee released a joint, bipartisan framework for repealing the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and creating a new Medicare physician payment system. Key provisions of the framework include a repeal of the flawed SGR formula; a 10-year freeze in payment updates with annual positive updates beginning in 2024; a value-based performance (VBP) payment program to be implemented in 2017, essentially combining all current incentive and penalty programs into one; and an overall emphasis on quality assessment and performance improvement through participation in a qualified clinical data registry (QCDR). ASTS continues to urge Congress to draft the quality-related provisions of the final SGR legislation in a manner that facilitates the development and recognition of team-based outcomes registries, such as SRTR, as QCDRs. In the absence of repeal, physicians face a 24 percent cut in payments starting January 1, 2014.

Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage Bill

ASTS continues to advocate for cosponsors for the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2013 (H.R. 1428/S. 323). As we are nearing 100 co-sponsors, we strongly urge you to contact your Members of Congress who have yet to sign onto the legislation. Only with a strong group of co-sponsors will be able to convince Congress to include this legislation in larger bills slated to advance to passage.

Affordable Care Act

ASTS has learned that in Oregon, the health insurance package being offered in the state exchange requires a 24-month waiting period for transplantation. ASTS members and transplant centers within the state have already submitted comments urging the state to reconsider this component of the state exchange. ASTS is preparing its case for why this waiting period should not exist and will advocate that this requirement be removed. Comments will be accepted through December 6, 2013.

PHS Guideline Development for Encephalitis Transmission in Transplantation

ASTS and the American Society of Transplantation (AST) have sent [a joint letter to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control](#) requesting to formally participate in the proposed development of a guideline addressing the potential transmission of encephalitis through organ transplantation. The letter points out the organizations' expertise that could be of assistance in reaching the appropriate balance between patient safety and organ availability in this area. It also requests that HRSA be involved to ensure that HHS' interest in maximizing access to transplantable organs is represented as the guideline is drafted. ASTS will continue making efforts to participate in this process and monitor the outcome.

ASTS Winter Symposium Legislative Update and Advocacy Symposium

On Friday, January 24, immediately preceding the Winter Symposium, a half-day session will inform you about legislation that impacts transplantation, ASTS' advocacy work, and how to make your voice heard at the state and federal levels as health care reform is implemented. [Register online for this session](#) and for the entire Winter Symposium, including the ASTS 40th Anniversary Gala celebration.

Missed an Issue?

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