

OCTOBER, 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nancy M. Porambo

There is plenty happening around the issue of licensure! As you know, HB 1643 has been introduced in June. We had 67 State Representatives sign on to the bill and several more have signed on since the bill was introduced! Our Government Relations Committee under the direction of 3rd Vice President, Nina Kottkamp, and Government Relations Chair, Scott Dugan, have worked very hard to move this bill in the right direction.

At present, we are planning a Rally for October 26, 2005 at 9 a.m. Several State Representatives are scheduled to speak as well as several representatives from AMTA, PaBTA and ABMP. To bring you up-to-date on the support from other professions we have received thus far, the Pennsylvania Physical Therapists Association President, Geraldine Gryzbek has stated that their organization does not support licensure or our bill as it is currently written. What's the problem: they question the definition of "therapeutic" and state that "massage does not promote healing and rehabilitation." They also state that "massage therapists do not possess adequate education and training to be interpreted as such". They also suggest that if massage therapists do promote healing and rehabilitation, that they should be supervised as they would "create a serious health issue to the public". They are also not in favor of the "broad" grandfathering clause that is written in the bill. They have further gone on record as stating that massage therapists should be certified or registered.

As many of you know, 37 states are currently licensed and 9 are currently pending licensure. The majority of states are self-regulated through their own boards. I find myself continually asking why physical therapists have a problem with massage therapists desiring inclusion in the health care industry when thousands of therapists all over the country are licensed. In most states, licensed health care professionals work with each other for the benefit of the individual. Why not in Pennsylvania?

I called the National office of the physical therapists and could not find an answer why physical therapists in Pennsylvania oppose licensing when other states like Georgia and Nevada (who both had licensure pass), had the full support of the physical therapists! It appears that the Physical Therapists in this portion of the country also opposed the bills in New Jersey and Maryland.

The AMTA Board of Directors has supported the issue of licensure for the past 13 years based on the response from our membership to seek licensure. Through licensure, we protect our own profession by regulating ourselves, and not have another profession regulating us. Licensure will also establish educational guidelines for massage therapists. It will also protect the public from unqualified practitioners and from unscrupulous individuals holding themselves out as massage therapists. Licensure will also ensure a level of standards that promotes the highest possible standards of credibility and integrity for the massage therapist practicing in Pennsylvania.

Your Government Relations Committee has been working hard for you! They have recently completed Phase I of their grassroots project. They are in the process of Phase II and look forward to our Rally at the Capitol. If you are passionate about protecting your right to practice as a massage therapist, believe in raising the standards of massage therapy in Pennsylvania, and support establishing educational guidelines for the profession, please join us at our Rally. Buses will be leaving from Philadelphia and Allentown. Please contact the following volunteers (please see below) to make arrangements for attending. I would also like to encourage you to contact your State Representative and Senator to voice your support for this bill. Many thanks to all of you who have distributed cards and made phone calls, written letters and attended the monthly chair massage program at the Rotunda.

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