

Legislative Update October, 2006

On October 25, 2006, AMTA members took to the floors of the State Capitol in celebration of PA Massage Therapy Awareness Week. PA Massage Therapy Awareness Week coincides with the National Massage Therapy Awareness Week, October 21st through October 28th.

Many thanks to Margie Schaffer of the Synergy School near Gettysburg and her students who provided chair massage to legislative staffers. Also, a special thank you goes out to Mike Walters for spending time visiting State Representatives offices to talk about the benefits of massage therapy and legislation. A thank you also goes to Terry Tosh, Past-President of PaBTA, the grassroots coalition on licensure, and her students who spoke to legislators. More on this will be featured in our next newsletter.

HB 1643 is still in the House Professional Licensure Committee. On September 25, 2006, a special meeting occurred between Rep. McCall, our organization's representatives and our lobbyist and the President of the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association and their lobbyist. An agreement on language was made at that time with the understanding these changes would be put forth as amendments to our bill and would move into the House Professional Licensure Committee on October 17th.

The physical therapists then added several words to our language, without our agreement, that we felt changed the meaning of the language. It is for this reason that our bill was taken off the agenda for October 17th and rescheduled for October 24th. It was again taken off the agenda by Rep. Thomas Gannon of Chester County, Chair of the House Professional Licensure Committee against the AMTA's suggestion to use of the originally agreed upon language from the September 25th meeting with the physical therapists.

Based on feedback from our national association advisors, it is unknown what ramifications the addition of this new language would have on our practicing therapists so we could not agree to it. Rep. Gannon has had our bill in his committee of several years. Although we successfully proved to his committee, through two public hearings, that massage therapy is necessary and is a viable part of health care, Rep. Gannon has still not moved the bill through his committee.

Our bill dies in Committee during the month of November. We will reintroduce the bill in January with language that we feel not only takes into consideration the concerns of other practicing professions, but includes language that protects the practicing Pennsylvania massage therapists! Our intention is to lobby extremely hard in the very near future with regular attendance at the Capitol and to be in communication with our elected state representatives. If you are interested in joining us by making calls or traveling to Harrisburg, please contact President, Nancy Porambo at tchtpst@verizon.net or Govt. Relations Chair, Scott Dugan at mgchnds1@aol.com.

