Advocacy

The AHA is the voice of hospitals and health systems in Washington, earning respect and attention from political and opinion leaders and the media. AHA’s consistent focus on federal relations, policy, and communications has resulted in a strong record of informing Congress and the executive branch.

Our goal is to make federal policy-making relevant to the real work of taking care of patients and keeping communities healthy. We often play a key role in building coalitions among national organizations to help support hospitals’ goals. By advocating in the halls of Congress, the AHA provides national leadership on issues affecting health care and ensures that insight and expertise from hospitals and health systems is a key part of the legislative process.

Achievements

Some of the AHA’s major contributions throughout the years illustrate its dual trade organization/public interest emphasis. In 1937, when the notion of voluntary prepayment was still controversial, the AHA established the Hospital Service Plan Commission, now better known as Blue Cross. The AHA helped establish and sought funding for the Commission on Hospital Care, the recommendations of which led to establishment of the Hill-Burton program, which requires health care facilities that have used federal money for facility reconstruction or modernization to provide free or low-cost health care services to people living in the facility’s area who cannot afford to pay for the services.

In 1951, the AHA was instrumental in establishing the Commission on Financing of Hospital Services, whose work led to national recognition of the special health care problems of the elderly and culminating in the creation of Medicare in 1965. The AHA was an early advocate of prospective pricing for Medicare reimbursement and set the pace for understanding and eventual congressional passage of a prospective pricing system. In all these initiatives, the AHA sought to improve health care and address the needs of communities that hospitals serve.

About the American Hospital Association

The American Hospital Association (AHA) is the national organization that represents and serves all types of hospitals, health care networks, and their patients and communities. Close to 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other providers of care and 37,000 individual members come together to form the AHA.

Through our representation and advocacy activities, AHA ensures that members’ perspectives and needs are heard and addressed in national health policy development, legislative and regulatory debates, and judicial matters. Our advocacy efforts include the legislative and executive branches and include the legislative and regulatory arenas.

Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends.

Offices

The AHA was located initially in Cleveland, where it was founded, and then in Washington, DC, from 1917 to 1920. In 1920, the AHA established its headquarters in Chicago, where the majority of employees are still located. The Washington office was established in 1942 in response to the pressures of shortages brought on by World War II. At that time, the Washington office served as an information center to assist members in contacting the proper federal agencies. Currently, it is the principal lobbying arm of the AHA. The Office of the President and CEO and AHA policy, communication, and national advocacy staff are located in the AHA Washington office.

The AHA also has a team of regional executives throughout the nation, often housed in state hospital association offices.