



American Hospital
Association

HIGHLIGHTS
GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING
AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals
February 14-15, 2011 ★ Rosemont, IL

The governing council of the AHA Section for Small or Rural hospitals met February 14-15, 2011 in Rosemont, IL. Governing council members received reports on AHA advocacy and regulatory policy initiatives and discussed several priorities including accountable care organizations and a culture of health and wellness. They reviewed the AHA strategic plan and an advanced draft of a future TrendWatch for rural hospitals. A roster of the Section's governing council is available at <http://www.aha.org/aha/member-center/constituency-sections/Small-or-Rural/roster.html>



Washington Update: Members received a report on the political environment, the Association's 2011 advocacy agenda, its strategy for the 112th Congress, and immediate policy priorities. Members were briefed on regulations implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 as well as the timeline on other hospital rulemaking such as insurance reforms, Medicaid funding and benefits, value-based purchasing, health information technology, and accountable care organizations (ACOs). They then discussed the specific impact these policies may have on low-volume, small or rural hospitals and the advocacy needs of this constituency.

Challenges and Opportunities of ACOs: ACOs are mandated as part of the ACA and have been heralded as a promising model for improving quality of care and reducing unnecessary costs through better coordination and collaboration among providers. Several requirements for forming a Medicare ACO are specified in the reform law, but many details about the program's operation are yet to be determined. AHA has commented twice to CMS with recommendations in developing the ACO program. Members commented on the key issues related to ACO developments, what must/must not be included in the regulation, and the role of specialty providers in ACOs.



AHA 2011-2013 Strategic Plan: Members were briefed on the AHA's 2011-2013 strategic plan, which reflects a number of key initiatives in which the Association is engaged on behalf of its members and the field, as well as strategies to strengthen its own operational efficiency. Members were asked to share the initiatives they have found to be most effective in improving performance around central line-associated blood stream infections, readmissions, and mortality measures. Members were also asked for input on tools and resources AHA could provide to help meet these goals. For more information about AHA's strategic plan, please visit: <http://www.aha.org/aha/about/index.html>

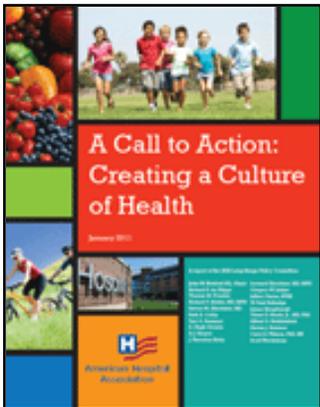


TrendWatch: Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Hospitals: AHA research reports examine key issues shaping the policy making process. These include the *TrendWatch* series, a periodic AHA publication that reports on the latest trends affecting hospitals and the health care system. Rural hospitals face many challenges common to all hospitals, but their unique characteristics make them more vulnerable to policy and market change than other hospitals including health care reform. AHA is writing a *TrendWatch* specific to the opportunities and challenges presented to rural hospitals under health care reform. Members commented on an advanced draft report.

Stabilizing the Debt: A number of transformational forces and the imperative to change federal spending patterns to stabilize the national debt amidst significant upheaval in how the general public perceives the role of the government, will profoundly affect the health care sector in the years ahead. To foster appreciation of some of the hard fiscal choices ahead, members were asked to complete a survey on how to reduce the nation's debt.



The on-line exercise, *Stabilize the Debt: an Online Exercise in Hard Choices*, walked members through different budget options for reducing the debt that included increasing and/or decreasing government spending. Members shared their responses and discuss alternatives. To access the exercise, please visit <http://crfb.org/stabilizethedebt>.



2010 Long-Range Policy Committee Report: A Call to Action: Creating a Culture of Health: AHA's *Health for Life* initiative identified a focus on wellness as one of the five essential elements to achieving better health and health care in America. Given its importance in transforming our health care system, AHA's Long-Range Policy Committee spent last year identifying successful practices in hospital employee health and wellness. The report is a bold call to action for hospitals to be leaders in creating a culture of health, and to serve as role models for healthy living and fitness for their communities. The committee found in its survey of almost 900 hospitals on employee health and wellness activities that over 86 percent

have an employee health and wellness program but that there is a tremendous variety in hospital program offerings.

Members were asked to review the report and discuss initiatives to improve employee health and wellness and how incentives might be created to encourage employee participation. To access the report, please visit <http://www.aha.org/wellness>.

For more information about the topics covered in these highlights or on the AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals, contact John T. Supplitt, senior director, at 312-422-3306 or jsupplitt@aha.org.