



Representatives from the Council of the AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals met June 5-6, 2017 in Portland, Ore. Agenda items for the meeting included a discussion of affordability, violence, cybersecurity, marketplace stability and survey and certification by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The council received a report from the AHA Board and received and discussed a Washington update. They also were oriented to and discussed services from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). A **roster of the Section's council** is available on our [Web site](#).



Washington Legislative Update:

Members listened to a briefing on the President's budget for fiscal year 2018 and the challenges of Affordable Care Act (ACA) repeal and replace. They reviewed the major provisions of the American Health Care Act and AHA's message on legislative priorities including a rural hospital advocacy agenda, Medicaid DSH and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Members endorsed the importance of the **AHAPAC** and the work of the



Coalition to Protect America's Health Care to take our message to the public.

Washington Regulatory and Policy Update: Council members were briefed on and discussed AHA's efforts to relieve the regulatory burden for hospitals in general and rural hospitals in particular. Members reviewed strategies for Medicare disproportionate share hospital payments, market stabilization and the inpatient prospective payment system proposed rule.



Marketplace Stability: Some counties and states are at risk of losing all insurer participation in their Health Insurance Marketplace in 2018. This would leave consumers in those jurisdictions without the ability to access the advance premium tax credits (APTCs) or cost-sharing reductions (CSRs) included in the ACA. Members provided feedback on policy options to stabilize the existing marketplaces for individual health insurance coverage and alternative policies to provide coverage options if the existing markets cannot be sustained.

#HAVHope Initiative Update: AHA is very engaged in community-based efforts to work together to combat all forms of violence, now viewed as one of the major public health and safety issues throughout the country. Members shared their experiences with community action programs to help address violence and the toll it takes on our communities and hospital colleagues. A [national day of awareness](#) was observed on June 9.



Policy Questions in Cybersecurity: Members offered feedback on a range of policy recommendations for addressing cybersecurity, such as incentives to adopt best practices, harmonization of regulations, supporting physicians, developing the cybersecurity workforce and medical device security. The discussion was informed by the new report of the HHS Task Force on Cybersecurity in Health Care.



Moving Forward on Affordability: Members received an update on the work of the AHA Committee on Strategy and Innovation on affordability and were asked to provide feedback on a plan for AHA’s work on the issue, proposed metrics for measuring progress and the concept of an “AHA Center for Improving Health Care Affordability.”



CMS Surveys and Certification: Members weighed in on a series of proposed recommendations to modernize on-site condition of participation surveys by state health departments.



Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) Report: HRSA is focused on access to quality services, a skilled workforce and innovative programs. Tom Morris, associate administrator, HRSA, FORHP, reviewed programs to improve both access to and the quality of health care in rural areas. He explained how FORHP strengthens regional and local partnerships among rural health care providers, expands community-based programs and promotes the modernization of the health care infrastructure in rural areas. Members expressed interest in several FORHP programs.



AHA RURAL HOSPITAL POLICY FORUM: We invite AHA members and their trustees to join us in Washington, D.C., to advocate for critical rural hospital programs, which will expire later this year unless Congress acts. We also will facilitate discussions with leading policy makers including Sens. Grassley (R-IA) and Heitkamp (D-ND) and George Sigounas, HRSA administrator, on the future of rural health care. AHA Executive Vice President Tom Nickels will moderate a congressional staff panel and

provide an update on AHA Advocacy priorities. [Register online.](#)



The [AHA Rural Hospital Leadership Award](#) recognizes CEOs and administrators who have achieved improvements in local health delivery and health status through their leadership and direction with a **\$1,500 stipend** to offset the cost of attending an AHA educational program. The 2016 Application can be found [HERE](#). Contact Jumel Ola, 312-422-3345, for additional information.

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.