

March 2017

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is pleased to present this issue of *STS Advocacy Monthly*, an e-newsletter with the latest and most important legislative and regulatory news relevant to cardiothoracic surgery. If you have comments or suggestions, please e-mail [advocacy@sts.org](mailto:advocacy@sts.org).

### **CMS Delays Mandatory CABG Bundle**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has delayed implementation of a rule that would create [a mandatory bundled payment for coronary artery bypass grafting surgery](#) in certain areas of the country. The start date is now October 1, 2017, rather than July 1, and CMS is even considering delaying implementation until January 2018. STS previously [commented on this rule](#) and plans to submit new comments during the 30-day comment window.

### **Reporting Requirements for Postop Visits Begin July 1**

CMS also has announced a new claims-based reporting requirement for 10- and 90-day global surgical services. The requirements are for postoperative services related to certain procedures furnished on or after July 1, 2017. These requirements affect groups of 10 or more practitioners in nine states (Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, and Rhode Island). The Society will provide additional information to affected STS members next week.

### **STS Participates in Immigration Roundtable**

On March 16, the Society participated in a roundtable discussion about immigration hosted by Democratic members of the House of Representatives Small Business Committee. STS Director of Government Relations Courtney Yohe shared how immigration issues affect the specialty, emphasizing that doctors and trainees in the US on visas serve vital roles in the over-stretched health care workforce. She also noted that many surgeons struggle with issues related to treating patients who defer necessary care for fear of legal ramifications and hospitals that provide a large volume of uncompensated care. Finally, she highlighted that the sharing of best practices across international borders is important for advancing medical knowledge and improving patient safety.

### **Society Signs Letters on AHRQ Funding, EHRs, CHD Research, Tobacco Control**

STS recently signed multiorganizational letters that:

- Supported the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's budget request for \$364 million in fiscal year 2018.
- Urged CMS to [address the regulatory burden](#) that electronic health record documentation imposes on physicians by establishing an "administrative burden" hardship exemption for the 2016 performance year.
- Encouraged passage of the Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act (S. 477/H.R. 1222), which would [expand research into congenital heart disease](#).
- Opposed the FDA Deeming Authority Clarification Act of 2017 (H.R. 1136), which would [exempt e-cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products](#) from Food and Drug Administration review.

**Key Contact Connect**

**Member Advocates for the Specialty on Capitol Hill**

STS Workforce on Practice Management Chair Frank L. Fazzalari, MD, MBA met with his Congressional representatives earlier this month to discuss issues that impact cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients.

“It was fascinating to see how various offices operate,” he said. “For instance, I met one of my senators in person, and we had an engaging conversation; contrastingly, another senator sent an inexperienced aide to meet with me. I also met with my representative’s senior legislative aide, who was quite knowledgeable, and it was very productive. Overall, I got my points across. I think it is important for surgeons to participate in the legislative process.”



*STS member Frank L. Fazzalari, MD, MBA (right) met with Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI).*

Would you like to be more involved in grassroots advocacy? [Become an STS Key Contact today](#). You also can attend the next STS Legislative Fly-In, June 12-13 in Washington, DC. [Learn more](#) and RSVP by e-mailing [mstirling@sts.org](mailto:mstirling@sts.org).