



THE COPA CONNECTION

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE RICK CHAVEZ, CPO

Orthotic and Prosthetic Colleagues:

This article marks my last column and it is with extreme pride in our profession that I now step down as the COPA President. It has been an honor to serve you over the last several years. Even though I am stepping down as the COPA President, I will continue to proudly serve on the Board of Directors as your Immediate Past President.



Rick Chavez, CPO

COPA has made great strides over the past several years for not only our businesses but most importantly our patients. We have had tremendous success "Under the Dome" with AB 2012 that provides real O&P health insurance coverage for patients similar to all other basic medical coverage. We have also pushed for increases in Medi-Cal provider rates. We have also pushed for further protecting the O&P profession by attempting comprehensive licensure and certification. The California Legislature now knows who COPA is and the unique role we plan in the health care system.

Under the leadership of the COPA Board of Directors and steady hand of our Executive Director & Lobbyist Bryce Docherty, we have recently "Retooled" COPA and established our three

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UNDER THE DOME

BRYCE W.A. DOCHERTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/LOBBYIST



"Tea Party Turnout"

All California budget related proposals on the May 19th Special Election Ballot (except 1F that prohibits the Legislature from getting pay raises in budget deficit years) failed miserably. None of Measures 1A -1E even cracked 40 percent support. It was also the lowest statewide voter turnout in modern history at 23 percent. It was truly the "Tea Party Turnout" with voters unequivocally denouncing any tax increases. Therefore, the Legislature is now forced back to the drawing board or chopping block ... again!

The Budget Conference Committee has begun marathon hearings. Everyone is in agreement that a \$23 billion current year budget fix is needed by June 30th to alleviate the state from going broke.

The CA Budget Project has compiled fact sheets on the Schwarzenegger Administration proposed cuts to Healthy Families (click [here](#)) and Medi-Cal (click [here](#)). The budget axe is still wielding cuts to eligibility and programs altogether. However, the Schwarzenegger Administration has asked the Feds for a waiver to cut an additional \$750 million in Medi-Cal provider rates. Provider rate cuts have been-

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BOARD MEMBERS[Rick Chavez, CPO](#)***President***[Ralph Nobbe, CPO](#)***Vice President***[Kel Bergmann, CPO](#)***Secretary/Treasurer***[Tom Beall, CPO](#)***Board Member***[Gary G. Bedard, CO, FAAOP](#)***Board Member***[Harry Brandt, CO, BOCO](#)***Board Member***[Mark Conry, CPO](#)***Board Member***[Lars Jensen, CP](#)***Board Member***[Robert Jensen, CPO](#)***Board Member***[Karl Lindborg, CPO](#)***Board Member***[Ed Rogers, CPO](#)***Board Member***[Bryce W.A. Docherty](#)***Executive Director/
Lobbyist******President's Message, cont'd.***

year strategic plan. This exercise afforded us an opportunity to define our vision and mission for the O&P industry. It also defined our specific goals and objectives for years to come.

I am personally very proud that COPA has recently reconstituted our Annual Education Conference. It was most recently held at Shriners Hospital in Los Angeles on Saturday, May 9, 2009. The continuing education courses were very well received. COPA plans on making future education conferences even bigger and better. I would like to give a special "Thank You" to our conference sponsors Otto Bock Health Care and Townsend Design.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The COPA Connection*.

Under the dome, cont'd.

off limits due to the injunction lawsuit filed and won by CMA et al last year. Pressure is being put on the CA Congressional Delegation to NOT grant the waiver request of the Schwarzenegger Administration.

COPA will continue to fight for saving O&P services from being completely eliminated in the Medi-Cal Program. These services are currently "optional" along with about 50 other types of services. Several "optional" benefits have already been eliminated.

***"If you miss a day
"Under the Dome" –
you miss a lot!"***

Did You Know?**COBRA – Coverage for the Unemployed**

As the California unemployment rate continues to rise, not only are people left without jobs, they are also often left without health coverage. COBRA or Cal-COBRA may help the unemployed keep their group coverage. Governor Schwarzenegger recently signed a law that will ensure Californians who lose their jobs through layoff or other involuntary termination while working for a small employer are notified that they may be eligible for a 65 percent subsidy for their Cal-COBRA premiums, available under the federal stimulus bill. This subsidy may help them pay for and keep their health insurance. The new law also gives those who lost their jobs on September 1, 2008 through May 12, 2009, and did not continue their health insurance under Cal-COBRA, an additional opportunity to seek that coverage now with the significant federal subsidy. Employees of larger companies should have already received notice of the premium assistance and additional election rights, as required by the federal stimulus bill. Click [here](#) for the CA Department of Managed Health Care Consumer Alert and [here](#) for their Frequently Asked Questions document regarding Cal-COBRA.



AOPA in Advance

Breaking News for O&P Professionals

Medicare Improvements Act (H.R. 2479) Introduced in House of Representatives

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV) has introduced H.R. 2479, the O&P Medicare Improvements Act of 2009, on May 19 - fulfilling commitments made at the AOPA Policy Forum to introduce the bill during the month of May.

The legislation proposes to link Medicare reimbursement for orthotics and prosthetics to the complexity of the device the patient needs and the qualifications of the provider. The bill re-asserts that any deemed accrediting organization recognized by Medicare needs to meet the BIPA 427 standard, namely substantial equivalency to the standards of ABC or BOC as a condition of receiving reimbursement for O&P services.

Additionally, the bill would require that if a state has a licensure law, Medicare cannot pay an O&P provider who is not licensed (or in non-licensure states, accreditation under the terms of BIPA 427 would be required).

The significance of O&P legislation being introduced now is the O&P field has specific bill numbers to reference in speaking with their Senators and Members of Congress urging them to co-sponsor the legislation. Securing more members of the Senate and House of Representatives sign on as co-sponsors gives greater weight to the possibility of seeing both pieces of legislation incorporated into any comprehensive healthcare/Medicare reform proposals expected to be introduced very soon.

Contact Steven Rybicki at (571) 431-0835 or srybicki@aopanet.org.

Reminder About DME MAC Policies

As a reminder the DME MACs have revised three Medical Policies. Most of the revisions went into effect on Wednesday, April 1, 2009, and the last change goes into effect on **Monday, June 1, 2009**.

The following policy revisions are currently in effect:

AFO/KAFO Policy

- Elastic braces, L1901, are no longer a covered benefit.
- L2770, any material, is invalid for claim submission.

KO Policy

- Elastic braces (L1800, L1815, and L1825) are no longer a covered benefit.
- Diagnosis codes ICD-9 844.0-844.2 and 996.40-996.49 may qualify a patient for the following braces L1830, L1832, L1834, and L1843-L1846.

TLSO/LSO Policy

- Elastic braces are no longer a covered benefit.
- Policy also includes directions on when the new CG modifier must be used. The CG should only be used when providing a flexible LSO/TLSO that is made of non-elastic material, or has a solid posterior panel.

The following revision goes into effect **Monday, June 1, 2009**:

AFO/KAFO Policy

- A KX modifier, indicating coverage criteria has been met, must be added to both the base and addition codes in order to be eligible for reimbursement.
- After June 1 any claim for an AFO/KAFO without a KX modifier will be denied as "not medically necessary."

Contact Devon Bernard at (571) 431-0854 or dbernard@aopanet.org.

The above articles appear through the courtesy of the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA), where it appeared recently in their publication "AOPA-in-Advance."

COPA ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE SUCCESS

The **COPA Annual Education Conference** was reconstituted on Saturday, May 9, 2009, at Shriners Hospital in Los Angeles. It was attended by nearly 60 practitioners and industry leaders. Attendees received CE credit on a variety of business and clinically related topics such as the legal aspects of selling an O&P business and socket, bracing and biomechanics of the upper and lower extremities. The audience also learned of the current public policy and political decisions being made in Sacramento and how those decisions may impact their ongoing practice and patient needs. COPA will be evaluating the success from this conference and look to establish the goal of providing one of the biggest and best annual CE programs in the country.



COPA Board of Directors and Officers Elected at Annual Meeting

Congratulations to the newly elected COPA Board of Directors and Officers. These industry leaders were elected to a two-year term beginning Wednesday, July 1, 2009, at the COPA Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 9, 2009 at Shriners Hospital in Los Angeles. The meeting was convened immediately upon adjournment of the COPA Annual Education Conference. The COPA Board of Directors consists of 11 members.

President:	Ralph Nobbe, CPO, Nobbe Orthopedics
Vice President:	Lars Jensen, CP, Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics
Secretary-Treasurer:	John Crane, Otto Bock Health Care
Immediate Past President:	Rick Chavez, CPO, Vogue Prosthetics & Orthotics
Board Member:	Gary Bedard, CO, Becker Orthopedic
Board Member:	Kel Bergmann, CPO, SCOPe Orthotics & Prosthetics
Board Member:	Harry "JR" Brandt, CO
Board Member:	Karl Lindborg, CPO, Touch Bionics

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES: \$1,200 Annual Dues (please check applicable category)

- Corporate – Patient Care:** Any firm or corporation that is principally engaged in the business of providing O&P direct services is eligible for this membership category.
- Corporate – Supplier:** Any firm of corporation that is principally engaged in supplying O&P businesses is eligible for this membership category.
- Corporate – Allied Health:** Any organization, firm or corporation that is engaged in the allied health field that serves O&P clients and businesses is eligible for this membership category.
- Corporate – Associate:** Any organization that represents consumers of orthotic and prosthetic care or other professionals who may also provide services to orthotic and prosthetic consumers is eligible for this membership category.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES: \$120 Annual Dues (please check applicable category)

- Individual – Certified:** Any practitioner who is currently certified and in good standing with the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics (A.B.C.) and/or the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification (B.O.C.) is eligible for this membership category.
- Individual – Technician/Fitter:** Any technician currently registered with the A.B.C. or any fitter certified by the B.O.C. is eligible for this membership category.
- Individual – Associate:** Any person with a professional interest in orthotics and prosthetics is eligible for this membership category.

(Name, Company)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

(Phone, Fax, Email)

NOTE: Please check here ___ if you decline to have 25% of your annual dues dedicated to the COPA Political Action Committee. Contributions or dues payments to COPA or COPA PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes. COPA estimates that 10% of your membership dues will be allocated to lobbying expenditures for the fiscal year 2009/2010, and are not deductible as business expenses.

Please make checks payable to: **COPA**

SHARE this membership application with your colleagues so they can become a member of the premier orthotics and prosthetics association in California.

Click here to view:
[Membership Registration Online!](#)

POLITICAL ACTION CONTRIBUTIONS

COPA POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE *CORPORATE* CONTRIBUTION FORM

President's Club (\$2,500-\$6,000): These prestigious members include manufacturers, patient care businesses and individuals who want to be constant and consistent actors in the issues surrounding the O&P industry. In addition to receiving all of the benefits provided to Leadership Board and Golden State Club members also receive a specially designed President's Club lapel pin; complimentary admission to all COPA events and Complimentary admission for one guest to attend a President's Club event. In addition, President's Club members may be included in "invitation only" receptions and functions with legislators whenever possible.

Leadership Board (\$1,000-\$2,499): These members receive a specially designed Leadership Board lapel pin; invitations to legislative briefings and receptions featuring key legislators who are active in healthcare policy and special recognition throughout the year at events and in COPA publications.

Golden State Club (\$500-\$999): These members receive a specially designed Golden State Club lapel pin and special recognition throughout the year.

STATE LAW REQUIRES THE FOLLOWING:

(Name, Company)

(Employer or Occupation)

(Address, City State, Zip, Phone)

COPA POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE *INDIVIDUAL* CONTRIBUTION FORM

Silver Dollar Club (\$365 One Dollar per Day): These prestigious members receive a specially designed Silver Dollar Club lapel pin and special recognition throughout the year.

Future Framers Club (\$25): These student members receive a Certificate of Appreciation for their contribution and education and training about effective advocacy and professional communication with legislators.

(Name)

(Employer or Occupation)

(Address, City State, Zip, Phone)

NOTE: COPA PAC contributions are NOT deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions may not exceed \$6,000 in one calendar year.

Please make checks payable to: **COPA PAC (ID#791961)**

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We're on the web!
[www.oandp.com/
copa](http://www.oandp.com/copa)

COPA'S MISSION...

Promoting the art and science of Orthotic and Prosthetic practice to create and communicate innovative solutions for a positive patient experience.

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE AT COPA...

Strength is measured by numbers. COPA has galvanized support from the O&P business community by encouraging businesses of all sizes to join as corporate members. Today the organization is moving forward in representing the needs of the individual practitioner in all areas of career development, including educational seminars and a renewed commitment to licensure for California. In order to facilitate individual contributions to support COPA, new membership categories have been added to allow students, technicians and practitioners at all levels of the career path to join COPA and share in the march toward professional recognition in California.

STANDING ON SUCCESS...

COPA has a proven track record in legislation, association governance and membership responsiveness. Representing the field since 1970, COPA is an organization that has the resources to bring the community of O&P together as one voice to strengthen and solidify the unique characteristics that typify O&P professionals today. An Uncertain Future Without Your Support... For many years, the few have supported the many while all have prospered. The burden has now become too great and the pool of resources must be widened to ensure continued success.

The threats to the O&P community are real. This year alone, practitioners have been sanctioned by the Board of Pharmacy and the Physical Therapy Licensing Board. Individual lawsuits have been brought against practitioners who now stand in legal limbo with no statutory scope of practice.

Limited state resources to treat the poor and those injured on the job are being bargained away to those with stronger voices and wider support.

What will history say about your commitment to O&P?