

FROM THE SOCIETY: PART I

Interested in Advocacy? Join Virtual Hill Days in the New Online SGIM Legislative Action Center

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This year, SGIM integrated a new legislative action center into the SGIM website and Facebook page in order to better serve the advocacy needs of our members. This new center, called Congress Web, is supported by SoftEdge and appears seamless to the SGIM membership, making it easy for our advocates to send messages to their legislators and others in support of SGIM's key issues.

Congress Web was also the cornerstone of the first ever "Virtual Hill Day" held in conjunction with Hill Day 2014. Virtual Hill Day was an opportunity for those members who could not physically attend advocacy events on Capitol Hill to advocate for SGIM issues from their homes and offices. Members of the Health Policy Committee crafted an advocacy alert and sent it to all SGIM members, asking them to advocate from their armchairs on graduate medical education reform. SGIM members then sent more than 100 e-mail messages and tweets to their members of Congress, broadening the reach of the Society and reinforcing the message of members who were making physical visits to their representative that day.

Due to the success of the first Virtual Hill Day and the participation in the Twitterverse with the hashtag #sgimadvocacy, SGIM will be hosting additional Virtual Hill days

throughout the year. On these days, and through the use of the legislative action center, SGIM's advocates will be able to:

- *Send messages to congressional representatives.* Advocates can harness the real power of Congress Web through options for message creation and delivery. Messages can be sent to members of the Senate, the House, the White House, or all of the above. We can also use the phone-call method for a last-minute pre-vote campaign.
- *Send letters to the editor.* SGIM members can search for their local newspapers and other media outlets and send an e-mail or letter to the editor about issues important to the Society.
- *Search for elected officials.* The legislative action center is now a key resource for SGIM advocates regarding their elected officials with a zip lookup, state lookup, in-depth information about individual elected officials, and special sections for Congress and the president.
- *Learn about elections and voter information.* In future elections, SGIM can now be a "get out the vote" powerhouse with voter registration information, absentee ballots, and up-to-date election information for presidential,

congressional, and state elections. SGIM members will be able to evaluate candidates with detailed biographical information and make informed decisions.

- *Track legislation and vote history.* SGIM will help keep you informed about legislation that is important to general internal medicine through information on bill details, co-sponsorship, and vote results.

Advocating on behalf of SGIM may seem daunting, but the new legislative action center makes it easy and accessible—even for new members. This month we are asking members to contact their representatives to stress the importance of Congress passing an omnibus appropriations bill rather than settling for a continuing resolution. The National Institutes of Health, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Health Resources and Services Administration will likely benefit from such a bill. Visit the legislative action center online at <http://www.congressweb.com/sgim> to compose your own message to Congress from the talking points and sample e-mail provided, and make sure you tweet your message and share on your own social networks. Together we can all make a difference on Capitol Hill and achieve our goal of "Every SGIM member an advocate!"