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TMA exists to represent Tennessee and every Tennessean. If that sounds like a stretch, it is not. By striving wherever possible to protect and improve current medical care and guide its future in this state, TMA works within many systems for the better health of everyone around us. We provide the health care by which Tennesseans continue to care for themselves, their families, communities, and so on. Led by physicians and supported by TMA and component society staff, we know systems only improve from within. Change for the betterment of any system is a fight most effectively fought internally, whether the system is government/legislative, education/training, corporate hospital, or the insurance industry. Each of these groups represents a system directly impacting physicians and our patient care, yet without actually caring for patients themselves. Every system has room for improvement and additionally must be adaptable to meet the changing needs of its beneficiaries: our patients. Henry Ford, a man who understood systems and progress, wisely said, “Don’t find fault; find a remedy.” As physicians, remedies are our specialty and Tennessee relies on us to provide them.

Finding and implementing the best remedies for our healthcare system happens with your TMA involvement and support. TMA membership renewals will soon be arriving by mailbox and email. Please take a moment when the notice arrives to send your renewal back to TMA. Your support allows TMA to keep pace with efforts to combat challenges to practicing physicians from trigger law changes and on-going attempts by physician assistants and nurse practitioners to gain independent practice. Legislation to increase the penalty for violence against physicians will go to the legislature next session and we believe it will receive strong support. TMA’s focus further includes insurance clawbacks and eliminating barriers to and any perceived stigma toward physicians seeking mental health services. Our patients stay healthy and strong when we stay the same. Seeking remedies for what may ail us, body and mind, keeps us working with our patients so that we all stay in the best of health.

If you have not yet completed the DEA’s recent mandatory eight-hour CME requirement for renewals, TMA can help. TMA has created a program that both satisfies this DEA requirement and covers the necessary two-hour state of Tennessee education mandate. This TMA program is available at ttnmed.org for $249. Please contact TMA staff who will be happy to help if you have any questions on the new CME requirements or accessing this program.

For the 2024 House of Delegates on April 6, please be aware of a new operational rule passed by our Board of Trustees regarding resolution submissions. A soft deadline for resolutions to be reviewed by the Legislative Committee will be three weeks prior to the HOD. All resolutions must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the HOD; this is a hard and fast deadline. Any resolution submitted less than two weeks prior to the HOD will be considered an emergency resolution requiring a two-thirds vote of the HOD for acceptance as new business. I strongly encourage you to begin work on your resolutions in the next few months to meet these deadlines.

A notable congratulations to our Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society for bringing Erlanger Health System physicians into our TMA society. More physicians standing united strengthens TMA’s ability to serve and protect Tennesseans.

If you doubt our ability as physicians to find and achieve remedies that produce needful changes across the systems that surround us, I’ve read that Mr. Ford had an answer to that as well: “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.” After nearly two decades working with TMA, I am resolutely confident we can positively impact the health of Tennessee by strengthening our role as physicians and improving the medical care we provide to our patients. Thank you for all your continued efforts in making Tennessee a healthier state to thrive in.

Andrew Watson, MD | 2023-2024 TMA President

TMA Co-Hosts Networking Reception with Life Science Tennessee

TMA recently cohosted a Nashville networking reception with Life Science Tennessee in coordination with LaunchTN’s 3686 Entrepreneurship Festival. Special thanks to Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner and TMA member Ralph Alvarado, MD, who addressed the gathered crowd and shared ideas for collaboration to improve the health of Tennesseans.

Pictured (from L-R): TMA Membership Relations Manager Anjanette Eash, Advocacy Administrative Assistant Alexa Stole, Communications Specialist Jonathan Kirkland, Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Ralph Alvarado, MD, Assistant Director of Government Affairs John Carr, Events and CME Manager Kathleen Caillouette, and Director of Leadership Programs and Education Beth Lentchner.
TMA members are now eligible to participate in TMA’s new Simplified Retirement Plan, offered through a new partnership with Mutual of America (MOA).

Key benefits for members and practices include:
- Substantial monetary savings on program administrative fees
- Potential reduction in annual plan audit requirements and expenses, if applicable
- Elimination of fiduciary responsibility on physicians in the practice
- Safe harbor provisions to allow greater contribution limits
- Flexible investment options
- Valued and recognizable employee retention tool
- Availability of certified investment specialists to offer assistance and advice

When considering the options, TMA’s offering through MOA provides practices with efficiency and savings that go beyond the bottom line. Reduction in administrative hours, money and time spent recruiting talent could all be achieved through this plan. TMA’s plan advisor, Kasey King, emphasizes the benefit of this assistance.

“The plan offered through TMA’s partnership with Mutual of America takes a significant amount of weight off of the practice surrounding the administrative responsibilities that come with managing 401(k) plans,” said King. “For practices that do not have a dedicated Human Resources staff member, the tasks on their end will not be a heavy lift.”

Serve as TMA’s Doctor of the Day in 2024

A central part of TMA’s mission is advocacy. In pursuit of that mission, the organization works with state lawmakers to influence public policies and advance the interests of the medical profession. Among the most effective strategies TMA employs to achieve its legislative goals is hosting physician members on Tennessee’s Capitol Hill through the Doctor of the Day program.

This unique opportunity allows physicians to connect with policymakers in a one-on-one setting to advocate for issues about which they are passionate while learning first-hand how the legislative process works. The program has shown to be a highly successful tool in fostering relationships with elected officials to directly influence policy outcomes.

“To those who have not had the opportunity to serve as Doctor of the Day with TMA, I strongly encourage you to take the time to do so,” said Dr. Jonathan Hughes, a Bristol-based anesthesiologist who participated in the 2023 legislative session. “The experience is quite rewarding and one need not be an expert in politics or government to participate.

“Our representatives in the state legislature value the interaction with their constituents, and as such were very welcoming. It is a well-organized, easy event in which to participate, and your presence helps your colleagues throughout the state. Again, I encourage all physicians to take one day away from clinical duties and participate.”

Registration for the 2024 legislative session is now open. Slots are available every Tuesday and reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Volunteers must have an active, unrestricted medical license and be a current TMA member to participate. Claim your spot online at tnmmed.org/doctoroftheday. Contact TMA’s advocacy engagement manager, Erika Thomas, at erika.thomas@tnmed.org with questions or for more information.
Legislative Dinners 2023

In concert with its regional component medical societies, TMA will participate in legislative dinners throughout several key markets this fall. These meetings will present opportunities for Tennessee physicians to connect and engage with their elected representatives aiding TMA’s efforts to positively impact the future of medical policy. Attendees will receive legislative updates from TMA lobbyists in advance of the 2024 General Assembly. The events are free for members to attend.

The following 2023 legislative dinner meetings are confirmed:

- Nov. 2 – Knoxville Academy of Medicine
- Nov. 6 – TMA Region 2
- Nov. 13 – The Memphis Medical Society
- Nov. 14 – Nashville Academy of Medicine
- Nov. 14 – Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society
- Nov. 15 – Montgomery County Medical Society
- Nov. 15 – Bradley County Medical Society
- Nov. 16 – Williamson County Medical Society
- Nov. 28 – TMA Region 8

State Rep. Kevin Vaughan (R-Collierville) spoke during a recent TMA All Member Virtual meeting about the importance and value of physician members taking the time to establish and cultivate personal relationships with elected officials.

“I encourage you to be a citizen advocate and talk to your local representative and senator on a regular basis,” said Rep. Vaughan. “You can build a relationship with them and they will look to you as a resource and trusted advisor. It does not have to only be when you are lobbying them over an issue.”

The guidance TMA members provide to Tennessee’s elected officials is essential to the success of TMA’s advocacy efforts. Events like the organization’s annual Day on the Hill in Nashville and the upcoming legislative dinners in local markets provide opportunities for members to share important information regarding their clinical experiences while cultivating relationships and beginning conversations with policymakers that can effect change.

“No one is as effective with your local representatives as you will be when you take the time to get to know them,” said Rep. Vaughan.

TMA was recently named the most influential advocacy organization on Capitol Hill, and these efforts further position the organization as a trusted voice within the legislature. In addition to generating these conversations, member donations to the TMA Political Action Committee (TMA PAC) supports the election and retention of pro-medicine candidates. The committee is responsible for the review and approval of campaign contributions with advice from TMA lobbyists regarding how legislators vote on Capitol Hill and whether or not they are supportive of physician healthcare issues.

To learn how to claim your spot for one of the dinners and secure your chance to advocate for the profession and patients across the state, contact membership@tnmed.org. Learn more and donate to TMA PAC at tnmed.org/tmapac. To review TMA’s 2024 legislative priorities, visit tnmed.org/legislative.

YOUR VOICE
IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

TMA PAC provides an important financial dimension to TMA's advocacy efforts by ensuring candidates who are sympathetic to the interests of physicians are elected to public office.

Learn more about how TMA PAC invests its political capital at tnmed.org/tmapac.
In Memoriam

We offer our prayers and deep gratitude for all passing members. Their positive impact on their patients and profession will last forever.

- **Bruce Marsh, MD**, age 91, of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society on Sept. 27, 2023.
- **Billy Arant, Jr., MD**, age 83, of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society on Sept. 12, 2023.
- **Priyamvada Chaudhary, MD**, age 36, of the Washington-Unicoi-Johnson County Medical Society on Aug. 11, 2023.
- **John Cox, MD**, age 91, of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society on Sept. 4, 2023.
- **John Duckworth, MD**, age 95, of The Memphis Medical Society, on Sept. 14, 2023.
- **Jerald Duncan, MD**, age 83, of The Memphis Medical Society, on Sept. 5, 2023.
- **Jerre Freeman, MD**, age 90, of The Memphis Medical Society, on Sept. 3, 2023.
- **Kenneth Jobson, MD**, age 80, of the Knoxville Academy of Medicine, on Aug. 27, 2023.
- **John Pender, Jr., MD**, age 87, of The Memphis Medical Society, on Sept. 4, 2023.
- **William Threlkeld, MD**, age 92, of The Memphis Medical Society, on Sept. 8, 2023.
On July 28, Cigna removed codes from its precertification list. For a list of the codes removed, visit [tnmed.org/prior-authorization](http://tnmed.org/prior-authorization).

## Changes to the TMA PAC Fiscal Year

In 2021, TMA changed the name of its political action committee from the well-established IMPACT to TMA PAC to alleviate confusion among lawmakers and increase awareness among TMA members. The outcome was transformational. PAC donations grew by 48% in its first year and legislators began to associate TMA's political contributions with the organization as intended.

Yet, one remnant of IMPACT that has prevailed through the transition and continues to consternate members is the fiscal year. For many years, the PAC fiscal year has run from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30 to correspond with dues billing. The justification for this was that members could easily donate to the PAC upon renewing their TMA membership in a simple, one-step process. But as more and more TMA members renew through their medical group or hospital, fewer dues bills are collected on an individual basis, making the PAC fiscal year functionally obsolete.

That is why the TMA PAC Committee recently voted to change the PAC fiscal year to a calendar year beginning in 2024. This will correspond with TMA’s fiscal year of Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 so that both timelines run concurrently. **In effect, this means that all donations received from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 of this year will be counted toward an extended 2022-2023 fiscal year.**

In addition to resolving confusion among TMA members about their current status as a TMA PAC member, changing the fiscal year to a calendar year will yield other benefits, including optimizing financial reporting during election years and aligning with seasonal fluctuations of physician net income. The hope is that this change will allow for increased participation in TMA PAC while continuing to strengthen TMA's political influence with elected officials.

To learn more about the value of TMA PAC, visit [tnmed.org/tmapac](http://tnmed.org/tmapac) or make a donation at [tnmed.org/donate](http://tnmed.org/donate).

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**NEW COURSE:**

**MATE Act Education**

**Controlled Prescribing and Substance Use Disorders**

[tnmed.org/mateacteducation](http://tnmed.org/mateacteducation)

Use Code TN50 to save $50
Legal briefs

Insurance Network Adequacy
Insurance plans must maintain an adequate provider network and report to the Commissioner of Insurance any material change to a network at least 15 days before the change. The commissioner may institute a corrective action plan if a network does not meet the standards of the law. A provider may request a review of the adequacy of a network. For all the details on this law effective Jan. 1, 2024, review our Law Guide topic Insurance: Network Adequacy at tnmed.org/lawguide.

Signing Death Certificates
A physician must sign a death certificate within 48 hours of the patient’s death. There has been a spike in complaints, and the licensing boards are responding with stricter penalties. TMA’s article that discusses the actions the boards are taking and the impact on a physician’s participation in insurance networks, hospital privileges, and malpractice insurance may be found at tnmed.org.

No Surprises Act – Dispute Resolution Administrative Fee
On Aug. 3, a court decision vacated the current $350 administrative fee per party for the federal Independent Dispute Resolution Process under the No Surprises Act. See TMA’s Law Guide topic, No Surprises Act, at tnmed.org/lawguide for more information.

Stimulant Prescriptions Shortage
The DEA and FDA issued a joint letter to update the public on the ongoing shortages of stimulant prescriptions and actions to resolve the shortages. To view the letter, visit https://tinyurl.com/56fvmkrn.

DEA Drug Scheduling
The Administrator of the DEA issued a temporary order to Schedule V synthetic benzodiazepine substances: etizolam, flualprazolam, clonazolam, flubromazolam, and diclazepam, in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act from July 26, 2023 to July 26, 2025. The DEA has determined this is needed to avoid imminent hazard to public safety. The full order on this scheduling is available at https://tinyurl.com/mwp8e9ps.

Prescribing Controlled Substances and Waiver Renewal
Any prescription for a Schedule II – V controlled substance must be issued electronically unless the prescription falls under an exception or the prescriber has a waiver. A waiver must be requested 60 days prior to the expiration of the current waiver. The list of exceptions, a link to the waiver application, and the process to renew the waiver are discussed in TMA’s Law Guide topic, Prescriptions. Member login required at tnmed.org/lawguide.

Electronic Verification of Employees
Employers must follow federal and state law to verify the immigration status of employees and non-employees (I-9 Form). An employer with more than 35 employees must use the E-Verify online system for this verification. TMA’s Law Guide topic E-Verification of Employees covers all the requirements and links to resources and is available at tnmed.org/lawguide. Member login required.

Background Checks on Employees and Contractors
Employers must search specific registries with the name of certain employees and contractors prior to employment by a physician’s practice. TMA’s Law Guide topic, Background Checks on Employees and Contractors, contains links to the required registries and information on when to check an employee or contractor. Visit tnmed.org to access.

Title Identification Law Guide Topic
Tennessee law requires a healthcare professional to display his or her license, post a sign at the building entrance, and communicate the license during every patient visit. See TMA’s Law Guide topic, Title Identification – Communicating Credentials to Patients, at tnmed.org/lawguide to understand all requirements.

Insurance Advocacy
TMA works on behalf of members to address insurance issues and assist physicians in navigating the complex world of claims payment. TMA can help if you are experiencing a problem with coding, claim payment, denial, recoupment, or other hassle with an insurer. Contact tabitha.lara@tnmed.org. TMA also has insurance resources available at tnmed.org/insurance.

RENEW YOUR TMA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2024.

Visit tnmed.org/renew today!