



Always Asking, Always Giving

By Michael F. Conlan

Sometimes it must seem as if NCPA is always asking: make a contribution, fill out a survey, submit data, write a senator, call a congressman, pay your dues. There's certainly a great deal of truth in that. It's also true so many of you generously give of your time and money.

We know that the number one reason community pharmacists give for joining NCPA is political advocacy. Now, more than ever, pharmacy practice and reimbursements are about government programs: Medicare Part D, Medicaid, Federal Employees Health Benefits, TRICARE, and state programs that cover their employees and the elderly. And the way to affect government programs is through political advocacy: in short, lobbying and political campaigns. The extent of our lobbying efforts, broadly known as government affairs, is largely dependent on our Legislative Defense Fund. (Political campaigns depend on another pot of money—the NCPA Political Action Committee.)

The LDF funds our national and state government affairs activities on your behalf. Legislative campaigns can be quite costly, as can litigation. A fully-funded government affairs operation is necessary to turn the tide in your favor, and can cost more than \$2 million a year.

In 2007, the health care industry as a whole spent \$216 million on lobbying alone in its efforts to influence Congress and federal agencies, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. (That figure does not include another \$16 million given to campaigns so far.) Millions more were spent at the state level.


NCPA needs a healthy LDF to fight back. Community pharmacy is subject to pervasive federal regulation from the usual suspects: the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Congress, the White House, and the government agencies play leading roles in setting reimbursement rates for serving Medicare and Medicaid patients. Medicare and Medicaid are expected

to account for 37 percent of all spending on prescription drugs this year. That is up from 20 percent in 2007. That means on average more than one-third of your business is directly affected by what the government does in just these two programs.

We also are fighting the PBM abuses that you and your patients face daily. NCPA is the only group in our nation's capital looking out for the unique needs of independent pharmacies. The PBMs have millions of dollars for well-financed and very slick government affairs operations. To help you and your business succeed, we need your support to obtain a seat at the table.

Personal and corporate funds are accepted for the LDF and there are no limits on the amount you can give. Corporate funds may be tax deductible as a business expense under the laws of your state. Ask your accountant. There are several ways to contribute:

- By web, go online to www.ncpanet.org for our Secure Contribution Form
- By check, payable to "NCPALDF" at 100 Daingerfield Road, Alexandria, VA 22314
- By phone, call NCPA with your credit card information toll free at 800-544-7447
- By fax, fax your completed contribution form to 703-683-3619 (We urge you to select the convenient option of automatic monthly contributions.)

Thank you for your continuing support of independent community pharmacy. 

Michael F. Conlan is editor of *America's Pharmacist*.