



LEGCON RECAP

MAY 5-7, 2025

HYATT REGENCY WASHINGTON ON CAPITOL HILL

#LEGCON25

I had no clue what to expect during my first experience at LEGCON. Held annually in Washington, DC, LEGCON is one of the most important events of the year for the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA). Hundreds of physician anesthesiologists from every state come together annually to learn about the most important legislative issues affecting our specialty at both state and national levels, as well as what we all can do to advocate for the safety and success of patients and physicians. A key part of LEGCON is having the opportunities to meet with each state's policymakers on Capitol Hill to educate and discuss our concerns in turn earning their support. This sounded exciting to me, but admittedly, I initially felt intimidated by this process and worried about being inexperienced or uneducated. However, I committed to being open-minded and was excited to learn as much as I could.



On Monday, May 5th, 2025, my first LEGCON began with a special session that I knew to register for weeks in advance. Booking out year after year, the Leadership Spokesperson Training Program is designed to teach attendees strategies and techniques to conduct effective interviews in preparation for meeting with policymakers later in the week. It was incredibly insightful to sit in front of a boardroom of other ASA members and be "in the spotlight," which helped me realize how I could be a better communicator when discussing the important issues that we would all be advocating for on Capitol Hill. In fact, I imagine that I will be using several skills that I learned here in many other settings as well. Next, it was time for the meeting portion of LEGCON to begin. I entered the enormous ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill and found familiar faces. I waded past dozens of tables of ASA members from across the country to join our team of residents and attendings representing Louisiana. I was the only medical student from our state at LEGCON this year, and I would later learn that I was one of just 22 students from the entire country in attendance. This was truly a unique learning opportunity for me.



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The meeting began with several leaders of the ASA Advocacy Division explaining the three ASA Pillars of Advocacy: legislative, regulatory, and political, providing context for the many topics of discussion to come. Next, we heard inspiring stories of state-wide and national advocacy successes. Admittedly, until now, my understanding of advocacy had been limited to the issues affecting physician anesthesiologists in Louisiana. It was so insightful to hear ways that other states have taken their own steps to support their specialty and prove that advocacy works.



On Day 2 of LEGCON, we learned about the most important issues facing physician anesthesiologists today from actual policymakers. Congresswoman Maxine Dexter, MD of Oregon, a pulmonologist and intensivist, explained how safe care in the Veterans Affairs (VA) system is being challenged by nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), who want to dangerously eliminate the current physician-led anesthesia team model. Congressman Herb Conaway, MD from New Jersey, an internist, would later continue this discussion and affirm that “legislators must lead with science” to ensure that “physician-led care is the paradigm in this country.” Next, Congressman John Joyce, MD of Pennsylvania, a dermatologist, discussed the need to fight for improved

Medicare reimbursement. Finally, Congresswoman Robin Kelly from Illinois and Congressman Marc Veasey from Texas detailed the encroachment of insurance companies on safe and proper patient care, as seen last year with Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield’s arbitrary, unsafe anesthesia regulations (their effort has since been squashed). These three primary issues—safe VA care, Medicare reimbursement, and holding big insurance companies accountable—clearly became the most important topics for the week and would be our main discussion points later on Capitol Hill.

During lunch, ASA welcomed special guest speaker Jake Sherman, political analyst and the founder of Punchbowl News, who explained the current state of affairs in D.C. Then, everyone was invited to choose a break-out session to attend with topics such as better understanding Medicare to running for elected office as a physician. Even though I’m still a student, I was curious to explore the “residency advocacy” session, in which several physician anesthesiologists and department leaders from across the country spoke about how they got their own start in advocacy while balancing their clinical and academic duties. This was particularly meaningful to me, as I have begun envisioning how I want to exercise my leadership skills during my own future career as a physician anesthesiologist. It was inspiring to be surrounded by so many leaders in this field who acknowledge their responsibilities for advocating for their specialty as a key part of the patient care team. Day 2



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ended with a panel of leaders from various state component societies sharing stories about their state-level legislative victories for physician anesthesiologists and Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs), such as opening new CAA training programs in Tennessee. By this point, I had a far better understanding of my duty and power as a soon-to-be physician to enact real change at both a state- and national-level to support my specialty.

To kick off Day 3, the final day of LEGCON, we had breakfast while listening to Congressman Andy Harris, MD from Maryland. He explained some of the most pressing current legislative issues affecting physicians and patients, including the recent decrease in Medicare payments and abusive practices by the Medicare Advantage plan. It was especially meaningful to hear him speak about these topics as the first and only physician anesthesiologist ever elected to Congress. Finally, it was time to hit the ground running and apply all that I have learned over the past few days to our scheduled meetings on Capitol Hill. For the next several hours, our Louisiana team traversed nearly every floor of the House and Senate office buildings to attend our appointments with Senators and members of Congress, explaining the three most pressing issues that affect physician anesthesiologists and how they can support our specialty as elected representatives of our state. Sure enough, with each meeting, I began to feel more comfortable speaking and discussing these topics, and I was genuinely amazed at how much I had learned over the past few days.

Just a year ago, I could have never imagined working with attendings and residents from across the country to advocate for anesthesiologists on Capitol Hill. Moreover, I could not believe that I would feel confident enough in my own understanding of these topics to discuss them. After just a few days at LEGCON, I felt proud and far more educated about what it would mean for me to soon become a physician anesthesiologist in the United States. However, most of all, I felt invigorated by the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit that everyone at LEGCON demonstrated and shared with me. Regardless of geographic location or political affiliation, everyone at LEGCON understood that the greatest work comes from a team effort and the supportive atmosphere was evident. I am already imagining being a featured speaker, myself, at LEGCON several years from now.



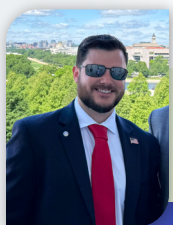
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I recently had the privilege of attending the 2025 Legislative conference in Washington DC. During my time in DC my fellow LSA members and I were able to advocate for the specialty of anesthesia on some very important topics such as maintaining safe standards of care in our VA hospitals, meeting with members of Congress about the importance of a permanent fix to address the decreasing reimbursement rates from Medicare the "Doc Fix Bill" and many other important topics that have huge implications to the field of anesthesia. After attending this conference and becoming more educated on the issues that we as anesthesia physician providers face, it is clear to me that we as physicians need to come together and make sure that we are all doing our part to preserve the specialty of anesthesia so that we can continue providing highly skilled and safe care to our patients. To any medical students, resident, or practicing physicians I implore you to take an active role in advocating for your specialty; join your local states chapter, become involved, or join the ASAPAC so that you or others can continue to advocate on behalf of us all to preserve our specialty. This has been one of the most eye-opening experiences I have had and I will continue to do my part to advocate for the field of anesthesia for many years to come.



Ross Rieger, MD
LSU Health Shreveport

Attending ASA LEGCON 2025 was an incredibly impactful experience that deepened my understanding of advocacy's vital role in anesthesiology. Through engaging discussions and congressional meetings, I witnessed firsthand how advocacy shapes policy and protects our profession and patients. I learned about current legislative issues affecting anesthesiology, such as reimbursement models and scope of practice, and how physician voices can drive meaningful change. One of the most powerful takeaways was realizing how accessible and important it is for all physician anesthesiologists to get involved in advocacy efforts. Highlights of the trip included networking with passionate members and residents from other state delegations, sharing ideas and experiences, and developing a stronger sense of community. A particularly memorable moment was meeting Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and advocating directly for our field's concerns. This experience has inspired me to stay engaged with advocacy efforts and encourage others to do the same, knowing that our voices truly make a difference.



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