

# LEGCON RECAP

MAY 18-20, 2026

HYATT REGENCY WASHINGTON ON CAPITOL HILL

#LEGCON26



I was thrilled to return to Washington, D.C., with the Louisiana Society of Anesthesiologists (LSA) for my second LEGCON experience. While there was certainly a learning curve during my first year in attendance, this time I felt even more confident and capable of representing the LSA and the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) in advocating to our legislators about the issues that directly affect our specialty and, most importantly, patient safety.



Before I even made it to Capitol Hill, I was excited to have been selected by the ASA to present my recent advocacy project in the inaugural LEGCON Advocacy Poster Session. It was an even greater honor to be the first LSA representative to present my work at this exciting event. During Day 1 of LEGCON, I stood alongside dozens of other students and residents from across the country, each of us eager to share our work in advancing patient safety and supporting our specialty through advocacy, policy, and education efforts. My presentation, titled “Inspiring the Next Generation of Physician Anesthesiologists: The ASA Medical Student Advocacy Project,” highlighted my experience as the Crew Lead of the inaugural ASA Medical Student Advocacy Crew in 2025, during which I collaborated with academic leaders nationwide to develop a creative video project to educate and engage medical students everywhere about the importance of professional advocacy. It was very encouraging and gratifying to have received such positive feedback from other LEGCON attendees and ASA leadership, and I was especially excited to have other medical students approach me to ask about opportunities to engage in professional advocacy efforts at both the state and national levels!

After the poster session, it was time to learn about the key issues that the ASA has identified this year that would serve as our main topics during our legislative meetings. Just as last year, it was informative listening to anesthesiologists and lawmakers give updates about some of the key issues facing patient safety and our specialty, and it was even more inspiring to learn about the great progress they have made in overcoming these challenges at the local, state, and national levels. This year, in our legislative meetings, we continued focusing on the importance of preserving a national standard for safe anesthesia care for our veterans at VA facilities and holding large insurance companies accountable through the No Surprises Act Enforcement Act. Additionally, we highlighted the importance of supporting NIH funding to continue medical innovation that directly benefits patient care.

Along with a team dinner at the historic Old Ebbitt Grill and interactive break-out sessions about a variety of topics (I loved attending the panel about engaging in professional advocacy in residency), LEGCON 2026 was another tremendous success for LSA! It was as rewarding as ever to have the opportunity to sit down with our legislators and advocate on behalf of patients and anesthesiologists, as well as continue learning about how I can keep growing as a patient safety advocate and diplomat for our specialty.



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This marks my second year attending the LEGCON conference. It has become a conference that I now look forward to every year for the rest of my career as an anesthesiologist. Being able to advocate for my patients in a different manner than I traditionally do in the hospital is a truly wonderful, eye-opening experience. Each year, I have brought back with me more knowledge and passion for advocating for the field of anesthesia. This upcoming academic year, I plan to try to spread that passion to my fellow residents. My goal is to have LSU Health Shreveport become 100% ASA PAC and LSA PAC participation. While recently attending the 2026 legislative conference, I was able to look at some amazing poster presentations that residents and medical students have worked on. Seeing their work inspired me to develop one of my own advocacy projects in the state of Louisiana. This year, during the conference, as compared to last year in 2025, I found that I was more of a leader. I was even providing guidance to a couple of my attending anesthesiologists who were attending the conference for the first time. I hope that I inspire at least one of the residents in my class to attend LEGCON next year so that they too can see how much of an eye-opening experience it is. I hope that next year we can have an even larger participation group from the state of Louisiana so that they can see how much of an impact our voice can have, and realize the importance of advocating for the field of anesthesiology with safe patient care.



#LEGCON26



Ross Rieger, MD  
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I had the great pleasure of attending the 2026 ASA Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. as part of the LSA delegation. As a resident anesthesiologist, most of my time is spent learning the pathophysiology and pharmacology of perioperative medicine. However, LegCon 2026 highlighted that many of the issues affecting our patients and our profession are shaped far beyond the walls of the hospital. It demonstrated the importance of physician advocacy and reinforced that anesthesiologists have a critical role in leading the anesthesia care team model to provide safe and effective perioperative care.



One of the most impactful topics discussed during the conference was the importance of protecting safe care for veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Advocating for physician anesthesiologist-led care within the VA system emphasized the responsibility we have to ensure that veterans receive the highest standard of perioperative care. Veterans often present with significant medical complexity affecting multiple organ systems. These patients deserve access to highly trained physician anesthesiologists who are equipped to manage the full spectrum of their anesthetic needs. Meeting with legislators and discussing how maintaining the same staffing model we use at the top academic hospitals at the VA made the issue feel tangible and urgent. It was empowering to contribute to conversations aimed at protecting vulnerable patient populations and preserving the highest standard of care for our veterans.



Another important focus of the conference was the growing challenges surrounding insurance reimbursement for anesthesia services following the passage of the No Surprises Act. While the law was designed to protect patients from unexpected medical bills, anesthesiologists have increasingly faced difficulties with insurance companies refusing or delaying payments even after anesthesiologists successfully win arbitration through the Independent Dispute Resolution (IDR) process. Hearing discussions about this issue helped me better understand the downstream consequences these practices have on small independent anesthesia groups. When insurers fail to honor arbitration outcomes, it undermines the intent of the law and creates financial instability for practices that provide essential perioperative services. The discussions reinforced how healthcare policy can have major operational and clinical consequences, even when legislation is initially designed with good intentions.



Beyond the policy discussions, LegCon 2026 was a valuable experience because it showed how we can effectively engage with lawmakers about issues facing our specialty and our patients. Speaking directly with legislators demonstrated that anesthesiologists bring a unique and credible perspective to healthcare policy conversations that is vital to maintaining anesthesiologist-led anesthesia care. Sharing real patient stories and firsthand clinical experiences allows policymakers to better understand how legislation affects every day medical practice and patient outcomes. I left the conference with a deeper appreciation for the importance of organized advocacy, and the influence physicians can have when they participate in the legislative process.





It was truly an honor to attend ASA LEGCON 2026 and, as a student, experience a three-day takeover of Capitol Hill by physician anesthesiologists from Louisiana and every other state in the union. To be honest, going in, I had no idea what to expect; I'm incredibly grateful for the support from everybody else in the Louisiana delegation in helping acclimate and orient me to advocacy work in our nation's capital.

Over the course of three days, we went through briefings and workshops to prepare us for advocacy meetings with our state legislators and their staff, as well as reports on advocacy results on both the state and federal level outlining wins for anesthesiology over the past year. We also participated in several breakout sessions and panels focused on promoting advocacy at a student and resident level. The key takeaway throughout all of these sessions was that advocating for anesthesiology and anesthesiologists is not something that is restricted to a select few. Everybody can do it, and is more than welcome to do so – every voice matters and lends weight to our advocacy work at every level, be that at an individual institution or health system, or at the state and federal legislative level. And unfortunately, our advocacy is necessary – because the other side is advocating tirelessly too.



But to be clear, although our work on the Hill was important, and although we put in time and effort to prepare for legislative meetings and to go over the ASA's agenda, the actual legislative lobbying meetings were a fantastic experience. We were unfortunately unable to meet directly with most of the Louisiana Congresspeople due to last-minute schedule changes requiring them to be in the chamber for most of the session. Still, our meetings with their staff were invariably thought-provoking, insightful, and rewarding. Ultimately, everybody wants their friends and family to get the best healthcare possible; as the ASA is always advocating for exactly this, it's usually quick and easy to get rational people on board.

Ultimately, then, my experience at LEGCON 2026 was incredibly rewarding and fulfilling. We got to see how the sausage is made on Capitol Hill and directly immerse ourselves in the political process. But despite how intimidating it may seem, politics is personal. Everybody can find a way to get involved in promoting the specialty and safe and effective patient care, and I can't wait to continue engaging in advocacy efforts back home. Advocacy matters for physicians and patients, and every voice does make a difference.





Before attending ASA LegCon, I viewed advocacy as something separate from patient care. Traveling to Capitol Hill as a medical student and watching anesthesiologists from across the country advocate for their patients completely changed that perspective. What initially drew me to anesthesiology was the opportunity to care for patients during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives in the OR. During LegCon, I realized that responsibility does not stop once a case is over. Seeing physicians advocate for patient safety, access to high-quality care, and continued medical research showed me that advocacy is another way we care for patients, just on a larger scale.

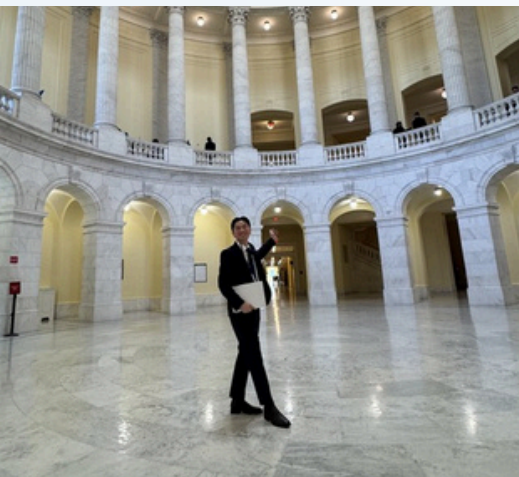


One of the most meaningful experiences was speaking with representatives and staff members about my experiences as a medical student and future physician. It reminded me that every patient encounter is an opportunity to advocate, whether that means caring for a patient in the operating room or speaking up for policies that improve the care they receive long before they ever reach the hospital. Walking through offices decorated with festival posters, football helmets, and even Senator Kennedy's alligator made Capitol Hill feel unexpectedly familiar, little reminders of home while representing Louisiana on a national stage.



As someone who is deeply proud to call Louisiana home, this experience reminded me why I want to continue serving patients as an anesthesiologist in the future. I left LegCon feeling honored to advocate for a profession I have worked so hard to pursue and for the patients we care for every day. Learning alongside medical students, residents, and attending anesthesiologists from across the country only further inspired me as I head into application season. Most importantly, the experience reinforced something I will carry with me throughout my career: patient care is a calling that extends far beyond the walls of the hospital.





As a medical student passionate about going to the field of anesthesiology, I wanted to learn the non-medical aspects of what this career entails. ASA LEGCON 2026 allowed me to explore the legislative and advocacy side of the specialty. With attendance of the conference, I learned more about importance of advocacy for physician anesthesiologist and the requirements needed to uphold the highest standards of care for patient safety.



At the Hyatt Regency in D.C., medical students and residents were presenting posters on various advocacy issues. Each poster had its own distinct viewpoint on the issues being discussed. Some of the posters focused on things like gender disparities regarding meaningful publications for residency, creating a system for advocacy at the state level, and the challenges with the current insurance model. By speaking with each presenter, I was able to see advocacy through a different perspective.



As the day went on, we started attending workshops of what issues the ASA are currently facing and what is being done. An issue that stuck with me deeply was the disparity of anesthesia care for veterans. Physician anesthesiologists are the recognized standard of care across in situations in the United States. It was baffling to me that the same standard of care was not set in the VA system, especially for veterans who have served our country. The ASA has been working actively to close this gap by advocating for policies that would require physician anesthesiologist-led care within the VA facilities. These are veterans who have sacrificed everything for this country, and the least we can do is ensure they receive the same quality of care as everyone else when they need it most.

To drive meaningful change, the workshops were followed by sessions led by professional lobbyists to help guide us on how to effectively communicate these concerns to the senators and state representatives. The thought of being able to speak to legislators and their staff was nerve-racking, but I knew that this was my one opportunity to help shape health care policy that could affect millions of lives across the United States. My anxiety was lifted away when I saw the experienced members of the Louisiana Society of Anesthesiologists speak up as I witnessed their passionate talk about patient safety and the importance of physician-led care.

Overall, this experience changed my perspective on what it means to be a physician. After walking down the halls of Capitol Hill and having the opportunity to shape healthcare policy, I was reminded that being a good physician goes beyond treating patients, we must advocate for systems that protect them. If there is one thing, I want other medical students and physician anesthesiologists to take away, it is that no one is too early in their career to show up. The decisions being made in Washington D.C. directly affect our patients and our practice, and if we are not in those rooms advocating for them, someone else will be making those decisions for us.

