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ASC ADVOCATES VISIT CAPITOL HILL

ALEXANDRIA, VA (FEBRUARY 15, 2008) – More than 100 ASC advocates from across the country made visits to nearly 90 Congressional offices this week as part of the ASC Association's 2008 Legislative & Compliance Seminar in Washington, DC. "This was an extremely important meeting for ASCs," said ASC Association President Kathy Bryant. "There's no better way to make certain that members of Congress are informed about ASC issues than to have ASC professionals who are providing services to patients each day meet directly with their members of Congress and their staff to explain all of the benefits ASCs provide and the issues ASCs are facing based on their own personal experiences."

Some at the seminar found that their elected officials were still unfamiliar with ASCs and needed basic information on the benefits ASCs offer. Others responded to already well-informed legislators and staff on questions related to topics like the Medicare ASC payment reform legislation currently pending in Congress, the ASC payment freeze and cuts included in the proposed 2008 budget issued by President George W. Bush recently and proposed changes in the Conditions for Coverage now being considered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)—changes that could affect everything from the way ASCs manage their infection control programs to whether or not ASCs in some states can continue to offer extended recovery care to non-Medicare patients and still provide services to Medicare patients.

In addition to visiting their members of Congress, seminar participants heard remarks from US Representative Kendrick Meek (D-FL) and CMS Acting Administrator Kerry N. Weems. "When we look at CMS and how they moved on their rule, and the cuts the President has put forth, we have a real battle going on," said Meek, sponsor of the Ambulatory Surgical Center Medicare Payment Modernization Act of 2007 (H.R. 1823). "It is important that we continue to get cosponsors. The more cosponsors we can get, the better. I'm glad I'm in on the bottom floor of this issue, and I'm looking forward to going to the top floor."

"Without action to reign in the costs of health care as we know it," said Weems, "Medicare can not survive. We need your experience to make this process work, so we're pleased to see that [ASCs] now speak with one voice." Weems also expressed appreciation for the comments CMS has received from ASCs on the agency's proposed changes to the Conditions for Coverage and projected that a final rule will be issued before the end of 2008.

Seminar participants also heard from nationally known experts on a variety of ASC regulatory and management topics, including

- the new Medicare ASC payment system that went into effect January 1, 2008
- crafting insurance contracts that protect your ASC
- new transparency initiatives in Missouri
- the recent court decision involving physician referrals to ASCs in New Jersey
- recent interpretations of the Stark law

"It was a great experience," said seminar participant Diana Ostrom, clinical administrator for the Grossnickle Eye Center in Warsaw, Indiana. "Everybody should come."

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The ASC Association is a national, nonprofit association that represents the interests of those who own, operate and seek the services of ASCs throughout the nation. The organization represents more than 2,500 ASCs, the professionals who provide care in such ASCs and the patients who seek care there. Visit the association online at www.ascassociation.org.