

# STATE-MENT

## MONTHLY STATE TRACKER UPDATE

APRIL 2020

### Welcome to Intermittent Legislation

Covid-19 has affected the continuity of government in unprecedented ways. States have had to innovate to facilitate legislative procedures that, regardless of stay-at-home orders, may be required by their constitutions to complete their public duty. This has led to a host of changes in legislative operations and procedures for state legislators including going in and out session a day at a time, voting from home, meeting in tents, “temporary” suspension of the legislature, and other unusual methods. Therefore, it behooves State Trackers to remain alert if any legislation of concern is still pending and there has been no official adjournment in your state for the year.

- **ASLP-IC Update:** As stated in our last State-MENT newsletter, 11 states had introduced the Audiology/Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact legislation and despite the pandemic, three Governors have approved their compacts. Wyoming was the first state to approve the compact on March 24, followed by West Virginia on March 25, and Utah on March 31. Fortunately, after extensive advocacy efforts, the WV and UT approved compacts both contain the Academy and AMA amendments. However, efforts by the WY Medical Society to amend the legislation were not successful. Currently, the most critical state to watch is Oklahoma. On April 6, following Senate passage, OK SB 1837 was suddenly removed from a House Committee, and without hearing, sent directly to the House Calendar for consideration. The Academy immediately wrote the bill Sponsor and the Majority Floor Leader to oppose the legislation. The bill is still pending and has not yet been amended. As a reminder, it takes 10 states, with similar language, for the compacts to become effective. The current state of play for ASLP-IC legislation is: bills are dead in MD and NE; in five states: AL, KS, KY, LA, and OK bills have not been amended and are sitting in committees or on Calendar. GA legislation has been amended, has passed the Senate, and is in the House on second readers. Given the fluid nature of the legislatures, please keep tabs and be advocacy alert!
- **Advocacy Works: Hearing Aid Coverage for Children.** On April 10, Virginia was added to the growing list of states which successfully convinced legislators that otolaryngologists, who specialize in the medical diagnosis and treatment of pediatric hearing problems, are an essential component to the appropriate prescribing and coverage of hearing aids for minors. Working together, the AAO-HNS, the Virginia Society of Otolaryngology-HNS, and the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics requested an amendment to SB 423, which was accepted by the sponsor and agreed to by the Senate. However, the House disagreed with the amendments and the bill went to conference. Fortunately, at conference, the Senate version prevailed and our amendments remained! Effective January 2021, **when recommended by an otolaryngologist** insurers will cover hearing aids for children, one per impaired ear every 24 months up to \$1,500 per aid. While there were an additional 45 bills in other states on this subject, Trackers in Ohio (SB 243) and South Carolina (HB 3284, HB 4995, and SB 915) continue to take action when needed. In Florida, despite valiant efforts to amend, SB 1006 passed the Senate but died in a House Committee.

### Tracker Monthly Calls:

Thank you to all our AAO-HNS State Trackers who previously were able to participate in our first two conference calls of the 2020 legislative season. As you know, because of the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on state sessions, we have had to cancel the past two calls. As a reminder, calls are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 8 pm (ET). The dates remaining are as follows:

- May 27
- June 24

### 2020 State Legislative Sessions

- Due to the fluidity of the Sessions, please continue to check [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org) under legislative sessions and the coronavirus.

### Recruiting State Trackers

- We are still looking for State Trackers for Alaska, Nevada, Rhode Island and South Dakota! If you're willing to volunteer, please contact: [legstate@entnet.org](mailto:legstate@entnet.org)