

Fact vs. Fiction: AAPA's Political Action Committee

A Rundown on How You Can Support PA-Friendly Candidates

BY KRISTIN BUTTERFIELD, MA

Election Day is fast approaching so it's a perfect time to remind you of the importance of AAPA's political action committee (PAC), the only one in the U.S. focused on representing PAs in federal elections.

The PA PAC helps ensure that candidates who understand the issues vital to our profession's mission and success get elected to office. But as we look for ways to grow PA PAC during this election season and beyond, we have discovered many PAs don't fully understand the role of PA PAC.

Here are some common misconceptions we've heard:

1. A large federal PAC isn't that important.

On the contrary, a strong federal PAC is important because *many* antiquated barriers continue to exist at the federal level that impede access to medical care provided by PAs. Having a robust PAC provides us with opportunities to engage in conversations with members of Congress, educate them about PAs and the

high-quality health-care you provide, and support the campaigns of those legislators who support our priorities—priorities such as the recently passed bill to allow PAs to prescribe buprenorphine to patients struggling with opioid addiction.

2. AAPA has plenty of money to contribute.

Under federal law, AAPA can't use membership dues to contribute to federal legislators who support the PA profession, nor can AAPA solicit non-AAPA members or corporations or affiliates for contributions. That's why contributions of individual AAPA members are essential to the success of PA PAC—because they are the sole source of funding for it.



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3. I can't afford to contribute to PA PAC.

We know PAs have lots of personal and professional financial obligations. But the real question, perhaps, is “Can you afford not to contribute?” Or, as AAPA President Josanne Pagel recently challenged, “Is your profession worth \$1 a day? I think it is!” *So far in 2016, PA PAC has raised \$41,600; in the same time period, the nurse practitioners' PAC has raised \$175,300.* In a city full of voices seeking an audience with Congress, PA PAC provides an opportunity for PAs across the nation to elevate and amplify the profession's message and voice on Capitol Hill.

4. Lots of PAs contribute, so it's ok if I don't give.

Actually, *fewer than two percent* of AAPA's members contributed to PA PAC in 2015. A Public Affairs Council benchmark survey found that the average rate for individual member associations like AAPA is 20 percent participation. PA PAC welcomes contributions of all sizes—in 2015 donations came in denominations of \$5 to \$1,000. The amount you give is less important than that you give.

5. I'm not sure how PA PAC distributes the money it raises.

PA PAC contributes only to candidates for Congress who have a demonstrated understanding of and support for the role of PAs in today's healthcare system. PA PAC supports Republicans and Democrats, senators and representatives. In a divided Congress, it is important we develop close working relationships with members on both sides of the



aisle and with different perspectives and ideologies. PA PAC does not contribute to or endorse presidential candidates.