



# Adv★cacy Brief

February 2015

## From ASDA

### **National Dental Student Lobby Day, April 13-14 in Washington, D.C.**

Register for [National Dental Student Lobby Day](#) by March 18. Get involved in advocacy and learn about what issues are important to ASDA and the profession. You'll also have dedicated time to meet with members of Congress and their staff.



Members lobbying at National Dental Student Lobby Day 2014.

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## From Washington

### **Action for Dental Health Act reintroduced with bipartisan support**

#### **What's the issue?**

On Jan. 27 Rep. Kelly reintroduced H.R. 539, Action for Dental Health Act. Rep. Simpson, one of

three dentists in the House of Representatives, signed on to the bill as the lead cosponsor for the Republicans.

The bill shares its name with the American Dental Association (ADA) initiative. Both the bill and ADA's initiative aim to eliminate barriers to care. The bill would support the following programs identified by the ADA that bring dental care and education to underserved communities:

- Reducing the number of people visiting the emergency room for dental pain
- Supporting charitable programs that provide care to the underserved such as Give Kids a Smile and Mission of Mercy
- Enabling residents to have drinking water with fluoride

### Why is this important?

Several dental schools participate in Give Kids a Smile, which provides dental services to underserved children. ASDA's A-13 policy encourages dental schools that participate to make accommodations within the curriculum to allow for greater student involvement in Give Kids a Smile.

Give Kids a Smile held its national kickoff event at A.T. Still University in Arizona on Friday, Feb. 6.

### Next Steps:

[Check with your state dental association to volunteer at a GKAS event.](#)

[Read more about the Action for Dental Health Act.](#)

[Read more about Arizona's GKAS event.](#)

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## ADA files amicus brief in Medicaid Supreme Court case

### What's the issue?

The American Dental Association (ADA) filed an amicus brief in the upcoming Supreme Court case, *Armstrong v. Exceptional Child Center Inc.* An amicus brief is a document filed by an organization not directly involved in the case, but has an interest in the outcome of the case.

The ADA is among six other health professional associations that signed the brief to assert the right to sue the government to enforce federal Medicaid law in the states.

Some states, like California, have very low Medicaid reimbursement rates which makes it difficult to ensure there are enough providers to serve all populations in need.

This case could determine if Medicaid providers have the right to sue the government based on a state failing to provide the resources necessary to ensure equal access to care as mandated in the Medicaid Act. Currently the only means of enforcing equal access to care is revocation of funding.

### Why is this important?

Private enforcement of equal access to care could lead to higher Medicaid reimbursement rates. This has the potential to increase the number of dentists who would accept Medicaid patients.

Whether you open up your own practice, work at a community health center or work as an associate, it is important to be aware of new decisions that could allow you to provide care to the underserved.

### Next Step:

[Read more about the amicus brief.](#)

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## From the States

### Communities in Massachusetts face anti-fluoride movement

#### What's the issue?

Communities north of Boston are dealing with activist groups pushing for the elimination of fluoridation from water supplies.

Health Roundhouse and Cape Ann Fluoride Action Network are two organizations leading this effort, stating that community water fluoridation medicates residents without their consent.

Rockport, Gloucester, Newburyport and Topsfield are among the communities that will address the issue of fluoridation.

#### Why is this important?

ASDA's I-1 policy encourages the fluoridation of community water supplies. ASDA members use this policy to advocate for fluoridation. Aberdeen, Massachusetts is another town that was questioning the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation. Harvard legislative liaison Lauren Kuhn took advantage of an opportunity to speak at a City Council meeting to promote the benefits of water fluoridation.

It is important to be aware of anti-fluoride movements throughout the country. You never know when you might get the opportunity to advocate for water fluoridation within your community.

### Next Steps:

[Read Lauren Kuhn's blog post.](#)

[Read more about the anti-fluoride efforts in Massachusetts.](#)

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### Ohio approves alternative pathway to licensure

#### What's the issue?

Governor John Kasich (R-OH) approved the [Ohio Dental Care Modernization Act](#) that includes a revised licensure policy for the state. Supported by the Ohio Dental Association, the Act provides an alternate pathway to licensure for students who complete an accredited dental residency program. Graduates of these programs would not be required to complete the regional board exam to acquire a dental license in the state.

The Act also includes provisions to double the funding of the Ohio Student Loan Repayment program to accommodate more students.

#### Why is this important?

ADSA's [L-1 policy](#) supports continual improvement of existing licensing exams, but also believes in a number of preferable alternatives to the current process. Alternatives include completion of a one-year postgraduate residency program as a substitute for the exam. Obtaining licensure via completion of a residency program is currently mandated in New York and is accepted in Washington, Minnesota, California and Connecticut.

**Next Steps:**

[Learn more about the Ohio Dental Care Modernization Act.](#)

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