

Fred D. (Tony) Thompson II, Esq.

Tennessee Government Relations

P.O. Box 2103 Brentwood, TN 37024

Mobile: 615-975-8169

Thompson@LobbyTN.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tennessee Academy of General Dentistry

FROM: Tony Thompson

RE: Post Legislative Session Summary

DATE: June 2, 2021

As this was my first year to serve as the lobbyist for the Academy of General Dentistry, I would describe the session to be challenging, impressive and rewarding.

The session was challenging primarily because the subject matter and the issues were, and are, new to me. While over the years I have done some limited work in the health care related field, the practice of dentistry and dental practice issues were completely foreign. It was also challenging because, and those of you familiar with the legislative process will know this, in the legislative arena nothing comes easy. We faced some tough issues and had formidable opponents in terms of bill sponsors and lobbyists on the other side.

Generally, I was impressed this session by, my client, the Academy. While I never doubted any of what I experienced, it was confirmed throughout the legislative process that the Academy is made up of members who are knowledgeable and committed to serve the goals of the organization to protect and promote the practice of general dentistry in Tennessee. Specifically, on more than one occasion dentists around the state took the time to call and/or email targeted legislators on relevant committees. There is no more effective lobbyist than a legislator's constituent reaching out about an issue of concern. Similarly, on more than one occasion Academy members showed up in person to discuss problematic bills with the bill sponsors and to testify in committee. It was not just me; legislators were impressed...and that is what counts.

Finally, this session was extremely rewarding for several reasons. It was a pleasure to work with the leadership of the Academy. I greatly appreciate their patience, advice, and information they provided me my rookie year. There is nothing more rewarding in my business than winning—and we won on every issue this year. While I would never want to take credit for what is truly a team effort, I know that I contributed to our successes this year. It was especially rewarding as the vote was taken on the “dentist anesthesiologist” bill and we had the votes to defeat it. Working with the TDA lobbyist it often felt like it was the two of us against a small army of lobbyists on the other side. It is the most rewarding when plain old hard work on tough issues prevails.

The top 4 bills from this session included:

SB676/HB1350 Limits the use of the title of anesthesiologist.

Sponsors Sen. Haile, Ferrell; Rep. Vaughan, Kevin

Summary This bill, we opposed, was brought by the medical anesthesiologists and backed by the full TN Medical Association. It sought to preempt a board of dentistry proposed rule recognizing the specialty of “dentist anesthesiologist” by prohibiting the use of the term “anesthesiologist” by dentists. This was a top priority to the Academy to protect the integrity of “our” practice and what is a nationally recognized specialty. A special thank you to members Katie Bradford for showing to advocate and Matt Yezerski for outstanding testimony in committee. After weeks of hard work, this bill failed in the house health subcommittee notwithstanding the support of the full committee chairman, an MD, and the Commerce committee chairman as its sponsor. It was not heard on the senate side. There will be more work to do when the proposed rule comes up for hearing on June 16th. The proponents may try again next year.

SB211/HB190 Rural health clinic - employment of dentist or optometrist.

Sponsors Sen. Jackson, Ed; Rep. Faison, Jeremy

Summary This bill was also a top priority to defeat to preserve the independence and integrity of dental practices, as it would have permitted rural health clinics to employ a dentist in direct contravention to the Dental Practice Act prohibiting corporate or non-dentist owned practices. Hard and fast lobbying and many grassroots contacts to legislators early in the session sealed this bills fate. The bill’s sponsors and proponents never even set it for a hearing and vote in either the house or senate committees.

SB410/HB565 Administration of COVID-19 vaccine.

Sponsors Sen. Gilmore, Brenda; Rep. Dixie, Vincent

Summary This bill, in its final form authorizes a licensed dentist to administer COVID-19 vaccinations as long as they have received appropriate training recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on how to administer the vaccination. The Academy fully supported this effort which passed and became effective May 18, 2021.

SB702/HB1284 Submission of reports to the governor from board of dentistry.

Sponsors Sen. Powers, Bill; Rep. Ramsey, Bob

Summary This bill codifies what an executive order allowed during the pandemic, in that it allows examinations to become licensed as a dentist to be conducted on a live human patient **or** a non-patient-based model. It also became effective May 18, 2021.