

Chapter 10

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

Grass Roots Advocacy and the Chapter Advocacy Liaison

This chapter addresses the following topics:

- Overview
- ASHE National Advocacy Program
- Grass Roots Advocacy
- Chapter Advocacy Liaison

OVERVIEW

“The code says I have to do what?” “Do you know how much that is going to cost?” “Who writes these things?” “Do they have any idea how things work in the ‘real world’?”

Do these scenarios sound familiar? You may have had these or similar thoughts when faced with complex code compliance and shrinking compliance budgets. Codes, standards, and guidelines provide a valued and needed service to ensure safe and effective design, construction, and practice. Unfortunately, some of these codes go too far in addressing a problem and become problems themselves, particularly if outside interests see an opportunity to influence and exploit a code for economic gain.

Who Protects Your Interests?

Many ASHE members serve on national committees to provide expert opinions on proposed code revisions and proposed new codes that affect the daily functioning of health care facilities. This ongoing representation is critical to ensure that codes are based on scientific principles and empirical data, rather than on anecdotes and lobbying by special interest groups seeking competitive advantages that add little or no safety value.

Through the process of advocacy, ASHE members have caused obsolete standards to be repealed and performance-based standards (based on actual safety outcomes) to be adopted.

However, ASHE’s Advocacy Program is not about saving money at the cost of safety. It is about intelligent interpretation of existing codes to ensure the most cost-efficient means and methods to meet the letter and intent of the codes, allowing for cost-effective safety management. Advocacy also extends to analyzing and influencing code revisions and the adoption of new codes.

ASHE NATIONAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

ASHE is an effective force for change because it provides a unified voice for more than 12,000 members nationwide—a formidable force to be reckoned with. But accurately representing you, the person who must work with these codes on a daily basis, is the key to meaningful change. This change starts on the grass roots level. When you share your concerns about existing national codes, review proposed changes, and offer comments, ASHE can better keep you informed of changes and accurately reflect your views and opinions to enact meaningful regulatory relief and real change.

GRASS ROOTS ADVOCACY

ASHE is establishing a **Grass Roots Advocacy Program** through its affiliated chapters to keep members current on proposed new regulations and codes revisions and solicit their valuable feedback on needed changes. When you stay up to date on codes that are of most interest to you, ASHE can voice your comments and proposed changes in a coordinated and effective effort.

The key to staying current on the issues is strong two-way communication between Grass Roots Advocates in the field and the ASHE Advocacy Committee. The key to effective communication is selecting an [Advocacy Liaison](#) for your chapter. The Chapter Liaison is the point person for identifying local issues and acting as a conduit for two-way communication with the Advocacy Committee. These liaisons bring organization to the seemingly chaotic process of code creation, revision, and enforcement.

CHAPTER ADVOCACY LIAISON

A liaison, appointed or elected by the chapter, receives timely information from the ASHE Advocacy Committee on current issues and proposed code revisions. The Liaison is charged with disseminating this information to chapter members and then providing feedback to the Advocacy Committee to establish ASHE positions on issues and craft arguments that support these positions. This may happen through a straw poll of chapter members, formal commentary, and even a letter-writing campaign.

The Chapter Advocacy Liaison is the conduit between the Chapter and the ASHE Advocacy Committee. Specifically, the Liaison:

- **Disseminates standards revisions.** The Liaison receives information through Advocacy Alerts, ASHE News, issue briefs, position papers (pros and cons), and talking points from ASHE via e-mail, online at the ASHE website, or through quarterly correspondence, and disseminates this information to chapter members.
- **Conducts straw polls on issues.** The Liaison conducts straw polls among members to determine support for or objections to a proposed regulation. This reality check ensures that ASHE truly represents the opinions and views of frontline health care engineers and managers.
- **Organizes review and comments.** To proactively influence the issue, draft language must be reviewed and comments (in support or opposition) submitted. The Liaison works with chapter members to select areas of interest for their review and then solicits their feedback on national issues (exchange of knowledge).
- **Forwards issues to ASHE for analysis and action.** Often national issues begin as state or local issues. The Liaison is encouraged to organize and submit chapter advocacy issues to the ASHE Advocacy Committee for review, analysis, and potential action.
- **Writes letters.** On some national issues, the most effective comment and influence is through an organized letter-writing campaign. The Liaison will be asked to disseminate talking points and letter templates to chapter members, and will encourage timely submittal of comment letters to the appropriate agency.