

## The Power of One

**T**wo years ago Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger failed to sign SB 1336. This is a bill that would have allowed qualified single degree oral and maxillofacial surgeons to perform isolated facial cosmetic surgical procedures within the purview of the Dental Practice Act. The criteria for permitting these individuals to do these procedures were restrictive and required a surgeon to demonstrate education, experience, and competence in this specific surgical area. A consortium of individuals within dentistry representing the California Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the California Dental Association, interested clinicians, and educators developed the legislative package.

The bill had its origin several years earlier as it was developed before being submitted for consideration. Numerous meetings were held and revisions offered until the involved parties agreed on the proposed language. CDA and CALAMOS then found a sponsor to introduce the legislation and the process began. As most of us understand, the pathway to having a bill brought before the Legislature and ultimately go to the governor for consideration is somewhat tortuous. Various committees of the Senate needed to consider it from their perspective. Hearings were held and communities of interest, including many of our member dentists, as well as competing surgical specialties who viewed this legislation as a threat to their practice, provided testimony. After those hearings and passage out of the committees,

the Senate as a whole approved it. With passage in the Senate, the process was repeated in the Assembly, including the committee hearings and testimony. During the entire process there was much made of the issue of “dentists doing facelifts” in the press and on television. Television interviews with plastic surgeons, showing a patient who, it was suggested, was operated on in another state by an oral and maxillofacial surgeon with a poor result, and joking by news commentators was noted on several occasions.

Despite this and the tedious process of the legislative procedure, the bill passed all of the committees and both houses of the Legislature virtually unopposed and was sent to Gov. Schwarzenegger in August 2004 for his consideration.

The governor vetoed the bill with a veto message requesting that his Department of Consumer Affairs complete an occupational analysis to determine if oral and maxillofacial surgeons had the education or could receive additional training to perform cosmetic procedures without compromising patient safety. During the ensuing year the analysis, complex in itself, was done and a result very favorable to oral and maxillofacial surgery was forthcoming.

As the occupational analysis was being developed, reintroduction of the bill in January 2005, as SB 438, with similar committee and legislative evaluation took place and the bill was once again sent



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forward to the governor for signature. After the second round of legislative review, and significant opposition by the plastic surgeons, the governor signed the bill last September with a message noting the positive outcome of the occupational analysis. This represents a significant legislative victory for the two organizations.

Interaction between a specialty organization with a vested interest and the CDA, which represents all dentists, was effective in getting the bill through the Legislature and to the governor for his signature. Although the number of members who will be affected by this legislation is relatively small, CDA supported the CALAMOS position that there was an inequity and discrimination in current law. There was a coordination of strategy and effort between the two groups, coupled with grass roots mobilization of members in both organizations, and this strong base was effective in the success of the legislation. We can be proud of the efforts that were made and the united front of these two dental organizations that allowed this significant milestone to be achieved.

The important lesson that can be derived by the successful lobbying efforts of the CDA and CALAMOS is that with collaborative programs, significant strides can be made. When dentistry speaks with one voice, there are fewer roadblocks to success in the legislative arena. With this unity, amazing things can be accomplished. We must not forget that. ■■■■

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