



WEST COAST  
DISTRICT DENTAL ASSOCIATION

A COMPONENT OF THE  
AMERICAN & FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATIONS

# CHECKUP

SPECIAL EDITION of the West Coast District Dental Association News

## What happens when you silence the voice of a profession?

What dentists can learn  
from the rapid decline of the  
American Medical Association  
and job satisfaction.

Special Edition for  
Non-Members

*See what's new and  
why your voice matters*

SERVICE

COMMITMENT

INTEGRITY

EXCELLENCE

West Coast District Dental Association: A component of the American and Florida Dental Associations

1114 Kyle Wood Lane, Brandon, FL 33511 wcdental.org (813) 654-2500 admin@wcdental.org

# Imagine a Future Where the Voice of the Dentist No Longer Carries Weight

MESSAGE FROM OUR WCDDA PRESIDENT: Robin Nguyen, DDS, MS



Imagine the year is 2050 and The American Dental Association is dissolved. That's not an abstract thought anymore, but a real possibility. We inch closer every year as membership declines and fewer dentists see

the ADA as essential to their professional lives. In the article on page 3, two dentists from our district describe how the decline of membership in the American Medical Association affected medical doctors. **What if that happened to dentists?**

This special edition newsletter is being sent to dentists in our area that are not members of the American Dental Association.

Dental associations rely on membership dues to continue monitoring and informing members about new tech, clinical advances, and laws and regulations. When we need to influence laws, strength in numbers is critical.

When we stand together, policymakers listen. When we divide, they decide for us.

Dentistry has long prided itself on being a profession—not an industry. But that distinction only holds if we maintain control over our destiny.

Joining the ADA is more than supporting an organization—it's investing in the future

of your profession. Membership in the ADA includes membership in the Florida Dental Association and the West Coast District Dental Association. The ad on the next page lists membership benefits and how to join.

At the national, state and local levels, there are numerous opportunities to make personal connections with colleagues and mentors, develop your clinical and practice management skills, and add your name to the collective voice that keeps our professional organization powerful.

If we ever let that collective voice fade, it won't just be the ADA that disappears... it will be the independence, respect, and professional identity that generations of dentists worked to build.

***Please help us maintain the strength of our association by joining or reinstating your membership.***

Membership counts. Every single membership matters. The ADA's strength has always come from the collective, not from the few who stay involved, but from the many who choose to maintain membership. Being a member helps advocate for laws that ensure quality dental care. It protects your license to practice freely, your right to lead in healthcare, and your ability to deliver the kind of patient care you were trained to provide. Thank you for joining us!



WCDDA President Dr. Robin Nguyen is an endodontist, practicing in Hillsborough County. Her husband, Dr. Christopher Chuong, is a pedodontist, practicing in Pinellas County. They are pictured here with their children, Emery (age 10) and Ethan (age 6).



## Mix & Mingle with Your Dental Organization

The West Coast Dental Association is a component of the Florida Dental Association. The FDA is a constituent of the American Dental Association. These three tiers of organized dentistry are dedicated to serving the needs of dentists and their patients.

### EACH TIER HAS A CONFERENCE:

**ADA Scientific Session**  
Indianapolis, IN  
October 8-10, 2026

**Florida Dental Convention**  
Gaylord Palms,  
Orlando, FL  
June 25-27, 2026

**WCDDA Summer Meeting**  
The Ritz-Carlton,  
Naples, FL  
August 21-23, 2026



# Your membership. Your benefits.

Thanks to the partnership of the ADA, state and local dental societies, we're watching our dentists excel, our profession advance, and our communities benefit.

And it all starts with you. Discover the ways your membership can empower you to thrive.

## Your Profession, Your Voice.

### ADA Member App

Explore career paths. Chat. Store CE transcripts. Connect. Mentor.

### Advocacy and State Public Affairs (SPA) Program

Educate federal lawmakers to protect our profession. The SPA program supports Dental Insurance Reform with grants to state dental societies to help them advocate for laws that help our dentists and patients.

### ADA Third Party Payer Concierge™

Questions? Navigating insurance claims? Get support.

### Legal Support

Assistance with contract analysis, litigation and employment best practices.

### ADA Career Services

Career guidance and resources for each step of your journey.

### Licensure

Working to expand interstate operability via the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact.

### Dental Sound Bites™ Podcast

Created for dentists, by dentists, with real talk about dentistry's daily wins and sticky situations.

### Continuing Education and SmileCon®

Cutting-edge, unique courses and the ultimate national event to improve care, grow your practice and more.

### ADA Standards and Seal

The ADA sets standards for dentistry tools and products to ensure safety, reliability and efficacy for dentists and the public.

### Career Center

Job alerts and current opportunities.

### Leadership Opportunities

Get involved through community outreach, or serve on ADA Councils, Committees and Task Forces

## Your Mind, Your Body.

### Mental Health Support

Resource directories, tools to manage stress and access to crisis support.

### Family Planning

Important considerations for practicing during pregnancy. FMLA standards. Workplace support.

### Ergonomics

Techniques and tips for pain-free practice.

## Your Life, Your Money.

### Member Discounts

Save time and money with top-quality products and services for your practice and personal life.

### Member Insurance Options

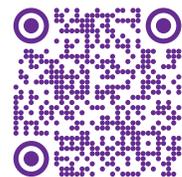
Access or get competitive rates, high-quality coverage for ADA tripartite members.



DR. CATHERINE MURPHY  
member since 2007

DR. JAMES LEE  
member since 2015

Learn more about benefits:  
[ADA.org/membervalue](https://ADA.org/membervalue)



© 2024 American Dental Association All rights reserved. Updated: 10/10/2024

# A Call to Arms for Dentists: A Wake-up Call from the Future

What dentists can learn from the rapid decline of the American Medical Association and job satisfaction. Can it happen to us?

BY DR. CHRIS BULNES & DR. JAMES WILSON

In 2017, U.S. News & World Report ranked dentistry as the #1 “Best Job” in America. That ranking wasn’t arbitrary—it reflected dentistry’s strong salary potential, job demand and future prospects, low unemployment rate, and enviable balance of stress levels with quality of life.

Since then, dentistry has only grown in popularity. Dental schools have never been more competitive to enter, attracting some of the nation’s brightest students who dream of a career that blends science, artistry, independence, and service. The profession enjoys a reputation as one of the most rewarding careers in healthcare.

Consider the numbers: In 1990, there were 5,123 applicants and 4,001 first-year enrollees, a 72.4% acceptance rate. By 2007, demand had skyrocketed, with 13,742 applicants competing for just 4,770 first-year seats, an acceptance rate of only 33.6%. Even in 2023, though applications dipped to 11,198, the expansion of dental schools still made for stiff competition. That year, 6,708 first-year students enrolled, with an acceptance rate of 58.6%. Meanwhile, the academic bar keeps rising: the average GPA of incoming dental students has climbed from 3.20 in 2000 to 3.66 in 2024.

For decades, dentistry has been one of the most respected professions in America. The work is rewarding, the hours are reasonable, and the financial stability enviable. That reputation wasn’t an accident. It was built brick by brick by dentists who stood together, through the ADA and state dental associations, shaping laws, protecting independence, and ensuring patients had access to care.

## But what happens if everything we cherish about dentistry gradually disappears?

What happens when a profession lives off yesterday’s victories but forgets to protect tomorrow’s?

How many times have you heard a colleague say, or maybe even thought to yourself, “Why should I join the ADA? What do they really do for me?” It’s a fair question, but here’s the truth: organized dentistry is the reason we can still ask it.

- Without the ADA’s federal and state victories on insurance reform, carriers would operate with near-total impunity. Network leasing would let your patients’ plans be sold and resold

without your knowledge, slashing reimbursement rates without recourse. “Non-covered services” laws, which today prevent insurers from dictating fees on procedures they don’t even pay for, wouldn’t exist. Dentists would have no shield from balance-billing nightmares or predatory insurer practices. Antitrust exemptions for dental insurers would remain untouched, allowing companies to collude openly and drive our fees into the ground.

- During the height of COVID-19, the ADA and FDA worked tirelessly to ensure dentists were classified as essential health providers. Without that advocacy, many of us could have been forced to close indefinitely while our patients’ needs went unmet.
- A colleague in private practice recently battled a large insurance carrier over unfair reimbursement policies. Only with the backing of organized dentistry, armed with legal resources and lobbying power, were those policies reversed.
- Years ago, a member faced legislation that would have sharply limited the



For decades, dentistry has been one of the most respected professions in America.

That reputation wasn't an accident.

It was built brick by brick by dentists who stood together, through the ADA and state dental associations, shaping laws, protecting independence, and ensuring patients had access to care.

procedures general dentists could perform. It was his state association, in partnership with the ADA, that stopped the bill. Without that intervention, his career would have been altered overnight.

**These aren't abstract victories, they are tangible protections for our practices, our patients, and our livelihoods.**

These wins weren't free. They were earned through decades of dues, lobbying, grassroots organizing, and countless hours of dentists volunteering. And, fact is, no individual dentist could achieve these outcomes alone.

Many see the benefits of organized dentistry's advocacy as background noise, rights that "just exist." They don't realize those rights only exist because organized

dentistry fought for them. Without an organized voice representing us, dentists would be voiceless in the halls of power. Legislators would only hear from insurance lobbyists, corporate chains, or well-funded activist groups.

Dentistry would be regulated, funded, and legislated by everyone except dentists.

But here's the problem: membership is shrinking and our profession is silently eroding its own future. Each year fewer dentists join organized dentistry, leaving the burden of advocacy to a smaller and smaller group. Some become disengaged, focusing only on frustrations while overlooking the victories. Others expect protection without contributing, and when organized dentistry loses a fight, or takes a stance they disagree with, they walk away entirely.

When our collective voice grows weaker, policymakers and corporations step in to fill the vacuum.

### **Foreshadowing from Medicine**

If this sounds alarmist, just look at medicine. In the 1960s, nearly 75% of US physicians were members of the American Medical Association. Over the past several decades, the AMA saw its membership plummet. As a result, physicians lost much of their influence over healthcare policy. Today, many doctors work in environments where insurance companies, government agencies, and corporate interests dictate how medicine is practiced.

As AMA membership fell below 15%, Medicare physician payments dropped 33% (adjusted for inflation since 2001). Those numbers aren't just statistics, they



Physicians are still respected, but their ability to shape their own destiny has been gutted.

Dentistry is not immune.

If we follow the same path, we risk losing control over our profession.

represent lost opportunities, rising burnout, overregulation, and the steady erosion of a once-independent profession. Many physicians were driven out of private practice, taking with them a profound loss of autonomy. This isn't science fiction, it's exactly what happens when a profession stops standing together.

Physicians are still respected, but their ability to shape their own destiny has been gutted. Dentistry is not immune. If we follow the same path, we risk losing control over our profession. Decisions about how we practice, how we are reimbursed, and how patients view our role in healthcare could soon be made for us, not with us.

### A Warning from the Future

Imagine opening your practice in 2040. You're no longer in control of your fees; insurance companies dictate them. Your autonomy in patient care is diminished; government regulations and corporate dental chains set the parameters. Patients see you not as an independent professional, but as a cog in a system that values volume over relationships.

The future of dentistry will not be decided by the loudest lobbyist in Washington or the biggest corporations. It will be decided by whether dentists themselves believe the profession is worth protecting.

### A Call to Arms

The future of our profession depends on what we do now. Our prosperity was earned, not granted. Organized dentistry

is our shield and our voice. Without strong membership, our ability to influence policy, protect patient relationships, and preserve professional autonomy will slip away.

Some of you may already feel disenfranchised; trapped by debt, overwhelmed by corporate pressures, or worn down by bureaucracy. But if you think it's difficult now, imagine a future of even higher burnout, financial strain, and loss of control.

So the real question isn't, "What does the ADA do for me?" The real question is: **What happens if I don't join?** The hard truth is that if too many dentists choose to free ride on yesterday's victories, tomorrow's dentists will not inherit the same profession.

This is our call to arms. Join. Renew. Attend affiliate meetings and develop relationships with fellow dentists. Most importantly, share your experience and encourage your colleagues to join, renew and become involved. When one of them asks, "What does the ADA do for me?," Speak up!

**Share this newsletter, and show them the ad on page 2 which lists many benefits.**

Remind them that organized dentistry doesn't exist just for one of us, but for all of us. The future of your profession depends on you being an advocate for organized dentistry to those who chose to denigrate its importance to all of us.

Our profession that we worked so hard to become a part of is changing rapidly, not always for the better; but it will be

exponentially worse if we lose our collective voice. By investing in organized dentistry, we preserve not only our careers, but the very identity of our profession.

The strength of dentistry tomorrow depends on the choices we make together today. Below you will find information about becoming a member, and your contact at the WCDDA office, should you have any questions about membership.



**WCDDA  
Central  
Office**

*Kira Blacyki, Executive Assistant and Membership Affairs Coordinator*

### Have Questions About Membership?

We're here to help. Whether you're curious about benefits, networking opportunities, CE programs, joining, or getting more involved — we would love to talk with you. Call WCDDA today and let's start the conversation at 813-654-2500 or email

[kira@wcdental.org](mailto:kira@wcdental.org).

New members can join the ADA, FDA & WCDDA tripartite by scanning the QR code.



# Get Together with your Affiliate Organization

Throughout the 13 counties in the WCDDA District, there are 11 Affiliates that meet regularly. Each of the county organizations are considered an Affiliate of the West Coast District Dental Association (WCDDA), the Florida Dental Association (FDA) and the American Dental Association (ADA).

In addition to the ADA, FDA and WCDDA, the Affiliates are a great way to meet other dental professionals in your immediate area.

## Benefits of Being Part of Your Affiliate:

- Access to a valuable source of new patient referrals.
- Foster camaraderie and professional connections with fellow colleagues.
- Advocate at the grassroots level.
- Attend continuing education dinner meetings, and connect with dental industry suppliers.
- Participate in exclusive special events and expand your networking opportunities.
- Stay informed about the latest developments and trends impacting the dental profession.



Separate membership dues is often required for affiliate membership, to cover the cost of meals, beverage, speakers, facilities, etc. There is always something going on ... and many ways to get involved!

## Affiliates in the West Coast District

### Collier County Dental Association

www.collierdentists.com  
President: Dr. Jake Hester

### Hernando County Dental Association

www.hernandocountysmiles.org  
President: Dr. Nicholas Ressel  
HCDS Central Office: 813-654-2500

### Hillsborough County Dental Association

www.hcdafla.com  
President: Dr. Nicholas Britten  
HCDA Central Office: 813-447-3452

### Lee County Dental Society

www.leecountydentalsociety.com  
President: Dr. Lilyann Cubero  
LCDS Central Office: 239-936-9240

### Manatee Dental Society

www.manateedentalsociety.org  
President: Dr. Margaret Kirkland  
MDS Central Office: 941-794-2422

### Pasco County Dental Association

www.thepcda.com  
President: Dr. Michael Caputo  
PCDA Central Office: 813-654-2500

### Pinellas County Dental Association

www.smilepinellas.com  
President: Dr. Jesse Jakubowski  
PCDA Central Office: 727-342-0374

### Polk County Dental Association

www.polkcountydental.com  
President: Dr. Geoffrey Rintel  
PCDA Central Office: 863-236-7610

### Sarasota County Dental Association

www.scdonline.com  
President: Dr. Jerry Cherry  
SCDA Central Office: 941-713-0961

### Upper Pinellas County Dental Association

www.upcda.org  
President: Dr. Sanjie Jackson  
UPCDA Central Office: 727-449-1254



# WEST COAST

District Dental  
Association

# SUMMER MEETING

AUG 21-23, 2026

The Ritz-Carlton, Naples

Register  
Today!



Lectures and exhibits, networking with  
colleagues, and plenty of time to enjoy  
the resort with family and friends



# SUMMER MEETING DETAILS

**Meeting Date:** August 21-23, 2026

**Location:** Lectures, meetings and exhibits take place at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples. The hotel reservation link will be provided once you have registered for the Summer Meeting. Limit 2 rooms per registrant. Individuals not registered for the meeting will be charged the hotel rack rate instead of the group rate upon checkout.

**Meeting Registration Fees:**

WCDDA, FDA or ADA Member EARLYBIRD:	\$295
Non-Member	\$445
Dental Student/Resident	FREE
Retired Member	\$70
Dental Team Member	\$85
Guest (no CE)	FREE
Golf	\$195

**Register before August 7 to save:** CE fees increase by \$50.00 per registration category on August 7. Preregistered dentists receive a WCDDA amenity.

**Refund and Cancellation Policy:**

All requests for refunds or cancellations must be made in writing to the WCDDA prior to the preregistration deadline of August 7. A cancellation/processing fee of 15% will be charged. No refunds will be given if cancellation is received after the preregistration deadline. No refunds will be given on site.

**Questions?** Questions or requests concerning room reservations should be addressed with The Ritz-Carlton, Naples (239) 598-3300. Questions concerning meeting registration should be addressed with the WCDDA office (813) 654-2500.



## HOTEL RATES AND INFORMATION

**The Ritz-Carlton, Naples**

280 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples, FL 34108

Coastal View \$269

Coastal Queens \$319

Gulf Front \$339

Parking per day \$15, Resort fee \$20 per day

The Ritz-Carlton offers an iconic luxury escape, blending classic elegance with contemporary flair. Enjoy pristine beaches, world-class dining, rejuvenating spa treatments, and personalized service, all designed for indulgent, unforgettable experiences. The WCDDA discount rate is extended only to attendees of our meeting.



WEST COAST  
DISTRICT DENTAL ASSOCIATION  
A COMPONENT OF THE  
AMERICAN & FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATIONS

# WCDDA SUMMER MEETING AGENDA

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

### Registration and Exhibits

7:30 am – 12:00 pm



### Golf at Tiburón

Friday, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Exciting times await as we prepare for a fantastic golf session at Tiburón. More details will be revealed soon, promising a memorable experience. Stay tuned for updates on the schedule, activities, and special features of this event. Prepare your clubs for a day of enjoyable golfing!



### Plug the Money Drain in Your Practice: Professional Financial Management for the Non-Financial Professional

Mr. Larry Guzzardo

8:00 am – 11:30 am, 3 CEUs

Have you ever wondered where all the money goes? Or why you don't keep more of what you've worked so hard to produce? Stop wrestling with the confusing steps to understanding where the money drains from your practice to gain financial control over your professional finances. Even if you don't like numbers. We'll teach you an easy way to track your break-even point, operating costs, and expense budgeting to stop profits from going down the drain.

This session will teach you:

- How to determine Operating Expenses vs Non-Operating Expenses.
- The difference between Production and Collection and how to stop the drain.
- The actual financial cost to you from write-offs and discounted dentistry.
- How to know if you can afford that next major purchase?
- How to easily calculate how much debt you can afford.

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

### Registration and Exhibits

8:00 am – 11:30 am



### How to Extend the Warranty While Still Enjoying the Ride!

Dr. Betsy Board

8:30 am – 9:30 am, 1.5 CEUs

Nothing can be more frustrating than burnout, illness, and disability after giving so much to our professions. This presentation will teach you the science-based and practical concepts of functional medicine as it relates to enhancing and protecting our vitality as professionals but also as human beings with a desire for the fulfillment of what we want most from life. We have seen this happen; after working passionately to achieve what we want most we often neglect a minimum level of health and longevity required to enjoy the fruits of our labors. As professionals in the health care industry, we are at exceptional risk, but so is anyone who is overcommitted and overextended. It's possible to immediately improve the quality of your life. Join us as we start the journey to develop a lifestyle that will serve as the foundation for a healthy, balanced life.

In this presentation you'll learn to:

- Feed your passion while avoiding burnout. And if already burned out? How to rekindle the flame.
- Discover why diversity confers stability
- Recognize and weed out saboteurs that inhibit your ability to think.
- Learn how to create a healthy lifestyle that will last into your later years.



### Integrating Dental Sleep Medicine into Your Practice

Dr. Joe Grimaudo

10:00 am – 11:30 am, 1.5 CEUs

This practical lecture introduces general dentists to the integration of dental sleep medicine using mandibular advancement devices for the treatment of obstructive sleep apnea. Topics include patient selection, delivery and follow-up of therapy, management of common complications, fundamentals of medical billing, and strategies for collaborating with physicians. Attendees will gain actionable insights to confidently incorporate dental sleep medicine into their practice while improving patient care and expanding clinical opportunities.

### Executive Cabinet Meeting

11:30am

### Affiliate Round Table Meeting

2:30pm

### WCDDA Officer Installation & Beer, Wine & Cheese Reception

5:00 pm – 7:30 pm

See next page for fun details about the theme for this event!



# SUNDAY, AUGUST 23

## Registration and Exhibits

8:00 am – 11:30 am



### Medical Errors

Dr. Nicholas Grimaudo

8:00 am – 10:00am, 2 CEUs

The purpose of this course is to provide health care professionals with an overview of the problem of medical errors, factors contributing to the occurrence of these errors, and steps that can be taken by

institutions and individual care providers to reduce medical errors in key care settings.

At the conclusion of this course, the participant will be able to:

- Recognize common performance and diagnostic errors.
- Describe the elements of a root cause analysis.
- Identify risk management measures designed to prevent dental errors and increase patient's safety.

### Domestic Violence

Dr. Nicholas Grimaudo

10:30 am – 12:30pm, 2 CEUs

This lecture will provide current and specific information for the proper detection, reporting, and investigation of human abuse. Participants will gain an understanding of the importance of the unique position of the oral healthcare team in recognizing abuse, and the responsibilities of the oral healthcare team as mandated reporters according to Florida law and the FDA and ADA Codes.

Additionally, participants will:

- Study the various maxillofacial, oral, head, neck, and body injuries that are generally associated with human physical abuse, to include child, spousal, elder, and abuse of the disabled.
- Learn the various types of abuse that may present, including physical, emotional, sexual, and financial, as well as neglect.
- Understand the behaviors that are common among abuse victims and offenders and will learn how their examination can aid in a complete investigation.
- Gain an understanding of the psychological, patient management, and treatment considerations of both the abused patient and the abuse survivor.



WEST COAST  
DISTRICT DENTAL ASSOCIATION

A COMPONENT OF THE  
AMERICAN & FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATIONS



To register for the meeting,  
scan the QR code or visit us  
online at [wcdental.org](http://wcdental.org).



## I HAVE NOWHERE TO WEAR THIS

### Theme for our 2026-2027 WCCDA Officer Installation & Reception

Saturday, August 22, 5:00 pm–7:30 pm

Join us as we honor the incoming officers and their commitment to advancing the organization's mission. Now's your moment to wear that outfit you've been saving for "something special." Our "I Have Nowhere to Wear This" reception lets you wear something bold, elegant, or uniquely you, whether it's a ballgown, tuxedo, or statement piece. Let's toast new leadership and enjoy a stylish, memorable evening together.



# PHOTOS & FUN FROM THE 2025 SUMMER MEETING



## It's great to get together with dental colleagues!

Never attended a dental meeting? Check out these photos from our 2025 Summer Meeting at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples. Attendees enjoyed quality Continuing Education, camaraderie, and fun. In addition to a WCDDA officer planning session, presidents of our county-level Affiliate organizations met to share plans and ideas for the coming membership year. We invite you to our 2026 Summer Meeting, August 21-23, 2026. Meet and connect with colleagues, while you learn, laugh, and make cherished memories!



# LECTURES, EXHIBITS, MEETINGS & RELAXATION

We hope to see you at the 2026 Summer Meeting: Aug 21-23, 2026 at The Ritz-Carlton Naples





# We Showed up in Tallahassee for Dentists' Day on the Hill

## MESSAGE FROM MATT AHRENS, DMD

*WCDDA Representative to the Florida Dental Association Governmental Action Committee*

The Florida Dental Association (FDA) Dentists' Day on the Hill 2026 was held on January 27, 2026, in Tallahassee. Though our work advocating for the dental profession is year-round, this annual event provides a dedicated platform for dentists to meet with legislators, advocate for crucial dental policies, and influence health legislation.

If you've never attended, it's a great way for any dentist to learn about the issues our association is focusing on, and see first-hand the necessity of relationship-building at all levels of government.

During this year's Florida legislative session, we're addressing several key issues that impact us all:

- Dental Therapy
- Big Beautiful Healthcare Frontier Bill
- Licensure by Endorsement/MOBILE Act
- Medicaid Dental Funding

If you have questions about these, you can reach out to me as I am proud to volunteer to represent the dentists in our area. As you can see from the photos here, there are several of us that stay involved and informed of the issues. We welcome your questions and involvement.

If you are not a member, I personally ask you to consider membership today. Your commitment to our dental association is vital to the strength and future of our profession. By joining or renewing your membership dues, you help ensure our collective voice is heard loud and clear when FDA lobbyists advocate for us at the legislature.

**Even if the only reason you join or renew is to support the dental profession, please know that your action truly makes a difference.** If you have a question about your membership status, reach out to the WCDDA, [admin@wcdental.org](mailto:admin@wcdental.org).

Your membership matters.



Dr. Matt Ahrens, pictured third from left, visited the state capitol with dentists from across the WCDDA area for Dentists Day on the Hill. All members are invited to attend. But even if you cannot take the time to get involved in advocacy, know that you are part of our collective voice by maintaining your membership.



Dr. Matt Ahrens represents the WCDDA on The Governmental Action Committee (GAC). The committee serves as the legislative body of the FDA that reports to the FDA Board of Trustees and reviews, analyzes, develops and supports/opposes legislative issues and regulatory issues that could have a negative or positive impact on organized dentistry. This includes issues addressed by the Governor's office, the state Cabinet, state agencies and departments, (which includes the Board of Dentistry) and the Legislature.

# 2025 advocacy highlights

BY OLIVIA ANDERSON

In 2025, the ADA drove major insurance reforms nationwide. Federally, the ADA pushed back on questionable insurer practices and sought greater payer scrutiny. The Association had legislation introduced — H.R. 1521, the Dental Optometric Care Access Act of 2025 — and secured 93 co-sponsors. In the states, the ADA supported 40 successful state-level reform campaigns, and secured key changes to the National Council of Insurance Legislators *Transparency in Dental Benefits Contracting*

*Model Act*. The Association advanced tax relief for small dental businesses and helped restore the pass through entity tax deduction, guaranteeing tax parity for small business dental practices. The ADA supported key provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act to strengthen military dental care. A number of states saw meaningful Medicaid changes across the country. Additionally, ADA advocacy helped protect community water fluoridation and prescription fluoride supplements. Here is an infographic sampling some of the Association's 2025 wins. For a full breakdown, visit [ADA.org/Advocacy](https://ADA.org/Advocacy). ■



## ADVOCACY MILESTONES

- The ADA pushed for the extension of crucial small business tax provisions in the budget reconciliation bill. Due to ADA advocacy:
  - **The pass-through entity tax deduction was restored, guaranteeing tax parity for small business dental practices and protecting dentists from a 1.5%-5% tax hike.**
  - The bill includes a permanent 20% small business income deduction, restoration of 100% bonus depreciation, new domestic research tax incentives, the preservation of a 21% corporate tax rate, and a \$40,000 individual state and local tax deduction.
- The ADA defended critical oral health funding for the CDC, HRSA, NIDCR and IHS to pass a bill with strong investments in programs essential to dentistry, funding for dental research and oral health efforts.
- Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act, which included an ADA-supported provision, sponsored by Rep. Brian Babin, D.D.S., R-Texas, to strengthen accreditation standards for military dental treatment facilities to help ensure the highest standard of care for service members.



## DENTAL INSURANCE REFORMS

- The ADA has successfully encouraged 93 co-sponsors of H.R. 1521, or the Dental and Optometric Care Access Act of 2025.
- **With ADA support, both strategic and financial, state dental societies were successful in 40 dental insurance reform campaigns in 2025.** Thirty-nine new laws passed and one legislative effort was successful in preventing the loss of an important, long-standing claim payment statutory protection.
- The National Council of Insurance Legislators made two ADA-supported changes to the Transparency in Dental Benefits Contracting Model Act, first adopted in 2020. Should the new language be adopted in a state, the insurer must first get dentists' express permission prior to using virtual credit card payment methods that require dentists to pay a fee to collect claim payment. Second, dentists' election on payment methods remains active until the dentist changes it or a new contract is executed.



## WORKFORCE

- Twelve states have enacted legislation to join the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact. The states are Nebraska, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Ohio, Kansas, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.
- The ADA authored the Dental Access Model Act, which supports the expansion of access to dental care, as a roadmap to help upskill dental team members.
- **The ADA has advocated to protect more than \$50 million in appropriated federal funding for workforce recruitment and development initiatives.**
- ADA advocated for bill introduction and secured 80 bipartisan cosponsors in the House of Representatives and Senate for the Resident Education Deferred Interest Act (REDI Act) to allow medical and dental students to defer payments on federal student loans and delay interest accrual until after completing their residency programs.



## MEDICAID REFORMS

- **At least 15 states adopted Medicaid changes significant for those providing or seeking dental care.**
- Twelve states enacted laws or policies that adopted meaningful changes for Medicaid dental care, resulting in higher reimbursements or other advancements such as increased annual spending limits for adults.
- At least three states improved program offerings such as extending post-partum dental care for enrollees and expanding the number of adults eligible for dental care.



## COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION

- **ADA-led efforts averted an FDA ban on the use of prescription fluoride supplements.** Instead, the FDA took the lesser action of telling companies to restrict use in children under age 3 or older children who were not at high risk for tooth decay.
- The ADA convinced the Trump Administration to continue the Biden Administration's appeal of the EPA lawsuit and filed an amicus brief in support of the Environmental Protection Agency's appeal of the court order directing the agency to further regulate the fluoridation of public water systems.
- **Of 23 governments proposing to end or limit fluoridation, 16 states rejected the idea. Some states filed several bills, all of which were rejected.**



1114 Kyle Wood Lane  
Brandon, FL 33511  
wcdental.org  
(813) 654-2500  
admin@wcdental.org

**Editor**  
James G. Wilson, DMD

**Co-Editor**  
Sanjie Jackson, DMD

**Executive Director**  
Lissette Zuknick

**Director of Operations**  
Kelsey Bulnes

**Director of Client Services**  
Jodi Hook

**Executive and Membership Affairs  
Coordinator**  
Kira Blacyki

**Publication Design**  
Amy Metz

**MISSION:**  
Helping Members Succeed

**VALUES:**  
Service, Commitment, Integrity,  
Excellence

**CULTURE:**  
The Reliable Resource for Dentists

PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
TAMPA, FL  
PERMIT NO 3311

The WCDDA Newsletter is published two times a year, in the Fall and the Spring. The Editor of the association and staff organize, print and mail to membership. The position of the editor is elected by the Executive Cabinet and does not have a specified term. The editorial staff holds the right to deny ads submitted for publishing. The newsletter may publish signed articles relating to all phases of dentistry, but assumes no responsibility for opinions expressed by the contributors. Publication in this newsletter does not imply the West Coast District Dental Association endorses any products or services that are advertised. Views, editorials, news columns and/or articles are those of the author's and not necessarily of the editor, staff, or members of the West Coast District Dental Association.

WEST COAST

SUMMER MEETING

AUGUST 21-23, 2026

West Coast District  
Dental Association at  
The Ritz-Carlton, Naples



**Registration is Open!**

See inside for details. To register, scan the QR code or visit us online at [wcdental.org](http://wcdental.org).

The WCDDA Annual Meeting offers a great balance of learning and fun, with interesting lectures, an exhibit hall, and plenty of time to network with colleagues and their families at the luxurious properties of The Ritz-Carlton in Naples, FL.