

# Political Action Committees:

## What Are They and Why Are They Important

**Amy Lamb OTD, OTR/L**  
AOTPAC Chair

**Denise Miller, MBA, OTR/L**  
AOTPAC Region 5 Director

**Winifred Schultz-Krohn PhD, OTR/L, BCP, FAOTA**  
OTACPAC Chair

# What is a Political Action Committee?

a group formed (as by an industry or an issue-oriented organization) to raise and contribute money to the campaigns of candidates likely to advance the group's interests

# Why is a PAC essential for OT

- Occupational therapy is not fully understood in the political arena where health care, education, and welfare decisions are being made
- Occupational therapy must have an advocacy presence to protect the practice of occupational therapy and access to services for our clients

# How does the PAC differ from Association?

## AOTA/OTAC

- Federal Affairs Department monitors the U. S. Congress and selected federal agencies.
- Establishes the legislative agenda in conjunction with association leaders.
- Lobbies for and against public policy initiatives based on the association's established legislative agenda.

## AOTPAC/OTACPAC

- The only legal means for an organization to raise and disburse funds to candidates for public office
- Provides occupational therapy practitioners with a collective voice on health care issues before Congress.
  - OTAC PAC = California legislature
- Provides funds to support candidates who support the profession of occupational therapy and its policy initiatives.

# The PAC: A Vital Component

- Political action arm of the association that complements the association's public policy agenda & supports its lobbying efforts
- By law, the association cannot give any financial support to any candidate running for office.
- None of the association membership dues can be used to support political candidates.

# How PAC advocacy works for you

- Candidates often host fund raising events
- The funds collected by the PAC can be used to have occupational therapists attend these events
- The profession of occupational therapy can be highlighted during these fund raising events and politicians can be educated about the profession

# How AOTPAC Stacks Up in the Tri-Alliance

2007

- APTA-PAC \$619,572
- ASHA-PAC \$145,929
- AOTPAC \$213,083

2008

- APTA-PAC \$626,177
- ASHA-PAC \$132,511
- AOTPAC \$259,564

# Why Donate

- Decisions of Congress and State Legislatures can and do have a direct, long-range effect on the occupational therapy profession.
- The PAC provides the association a key avenue for their advocacy efforts as well as assisting members in developing relationships with their elected officials.
- The PAC is an important educational tool for elected officials. When candidates and officeholders appeal for money from your PAC it means they want to learn about you and OT.
- You PAC leadership makes carefully studied, well-informed decisions on which candidates and officeholders to support.
- You are your association, your voice is the voice that moves this association and makes it the professional voice for occupational therapy

# What are the Federal Issues?

- Health Care Reform
- Medicare Therapy Cap Fix
- Home Health Flexibility Act
- Scope of practice expansions by other rehabilitation professions
- Insurance reform
- Loan repayment

# State Issues

- Be informed, be proactive
- Funding lobbyist to monitor specific bills
  - SB 819
  - SB 821
- Funded attendance at legislative events to advocate for profession and inform policy makers
- Track potential bills that could negatively impact on the provision of occupational therapy services in California, for example:
  - Bills related to those who receive OT services – autism
  - Bills related to payment for services – Medi-Cal
  - Bills that could potentially limit OT practice

# Purpose of OTAC PAC

- To finance political efforts supporting California legislative and constitutional officeholders and candidates (not Federal officeholders, candidates, or committees) that benefit the public by improving and protecting issues related to occupational therapy
- To assist occupational therapy practitioners and others in organizing themselves for more effective political action and in understanding the nature and actions of the governing bodies of California
- To establish a continuing political campaign fund to fulfill the above purposes

# Why is OTAC PAC important?

- Contributions to political campaigns from the body of occupational therapy practitioners (OTAC PAC) highlights the profession
- Politicians often host fund raising events
- The funds collected by the PAC can be used to have occupational therapists attend these events
- The profession of occupational therapy can be highlighted during these fund raising events and politicians can be educated about the profession

# OTAC-PAC

- Actions to promote the profession of occupational therapy and the Occupational Therapy Association of California to key lawmakers
  - Funds used to support occupational therapists attending luncheons/dinners hosted by legislators
  - Funds used to contribute to key lawmakers who are sponsoring bills related to OT practice in the State of California
  - Funds used to educate California lawmakers about the benefit of OT services to constituency

# A little here a little there

- AOTA currently has approximately 40,000 members
  - If each member contributed \$10 a year, AOTAPAC would have \$400,000 to focus on political action and support legislation that supports occupational therapy practice and YOU!
- OTAC currently has approximately 2,000 members
  - If each member contributed only \$10 a year, OTACPAC would have \$20,000 more to invest in you right here in your home state of California.

# AOTPAC 2008 Scorecard

- Supported 126 U.S. Senate and House of Representative candidates in 2008 election
- 119 won!
- 94.44%

# Take Action – Act NOW

Get Involved!

Contribute Today!

Make Your Voice Heard!

# Advocacy in Action



Are you ready to stand  
up for occupational  
therapy?

