

**2003 ANNUAL REPORT**  
**Vice President for Governmental Affairs**  
**Jane B. Senn**

This has been quite an exciting legislative year for SCSHA! Through the tireless, dedicated work of the professional lobbyists representing SCSHA, your Executive Board, and countless members, the primary state legislative effort of the association was more successful than it ever has been in the short amount of time in its history.

**STATE LEGISLATION**

The primary state legislative effort has been to have the ASHA CCC recognized with the same rights and privileges for public school speech-language pathologists as classroom teachers who have earned national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Due to extreme deficits in the SC state budget, bill S.655 written to support this legislation, was changed to read that eligible ASHA certified speech-language pathologists would receive recognition with the same rights and privileges as NBC teachers when the SC state budget allowed. S.655 sponsored by Senators Setzler, Hayes, and Reese ended its second year of legislation on the contested calendar of the Senate. It successfully passed both the Senate Education Subcommittee with no opposition and the Senate Education Committee with only 1 opposing vote.

There were two major concerns in the effort that we are happy to report have been resolved. The SCSHA executive board actively addressed concerns by a few SC SLPs that S.655 was racially discriminatory. This issue has been resolved after meeting with the concerned SLPs and other persons involved in the issue. The other major concern was expressed by the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment. Representatives from the SCCTR were concerned with funding of a salary supplement for ASHA nationally certified SLPs coming from the funds designated for South Carolina National Board Certified teachers. This issue was addressed in a meeting with the representatives of SCCTR and SCSHA representatives assured them that no particular existing fund has been designated for salary supplements for certified SLPs and that other avenues of funding would be explored.

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual SCSHA Legislative Day* was held May 1, 2002. Approximately 50 speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and students attended. A well attended breakfast was held for the legislators and their staff. Hearing screenings were offered to the legislators and their staff, also. The SCSHA ambassador and his family attended as well as a hearing impaired infant that was identified shortly after birth and her family. The day was a great success in spite of torrential rainfall and loss of electrical power for an extensive time in all the statehouse buildings.

*The SCSHA Legislative Task Force*, chaired by Sharon Brunson developed a list of all task force members and contact information. It was distributed among the members. The group developed a geographical phone tree with the mission to help disseminate information quickly to SCSHA members concerning legislative issues/actions. The force was active in encouraging the membership to make contact with legislators concerning the national certification recognition issue. It has continued to discourage the membership from participating in the NBPTS certification process under the category of exceptional needs specialist maintaining SCSHA's position that this is not an appropriate avenue for certification of speech-language pathologists. The group is developing a list of reasons why the NBC exceptional needs category is not appropriate.

*Lobbyist* - The SCSHA Executive Board voted at the January 11, 2003 board meeting to not hire a professional lobbying firm for the 2003 session. This decision was made for several reasons:

1. Lobbying fees have been paid out of SCSHA's reserve funds for the last 3 years therefore reducing the amount of reserve funds. The strategic plan that was approved April 13, 2002, states that the SCSHA Executive Board will "strive for an emergency reserve fund equivalent to one year's operating budget" in order to result "in financial security during potentially difficult budget years." Therefore, the board did not feel fiscally responsible in continuing to use reserve funds for lobbying efforts.
2. Another objective stated in the strategic plan is to create and "maintain a new initiative fund" of special interest such as grassroots advocacy in which money would be "used to fund issues related to a specific group within SCSHA." At this time, the grassroots funds are not enough to pay lobbying fees.
3. The SCSHA budget is in such a state that it is not able to allow for funds to be transferred from any one or combination of line items to increase the grassroots funds.

At this time, Jane Senn, SCSHA VP for Governmental Affairs, and Debbie Brady, SCSHA President-Elect-Elect are appointed as unpaid SCSHA lobbyists and will be registered with the South Carolina State Ethics Commission.

### **NATIONAL LEGISLATION**

ASHA's persistent advocacy on Capital Hill has been instrumental in winning a delay from CMS in implementing Medicare caps. Now that the 2003 legislative session has opened, it is expected that the Medicare legislation will be considered early in the session. ASHA encourages each member to continue efforts to make sure that Congress includes language in bills of both the Senate and the House of Representatives to permanently repeal the Medicare caps.

On February 3, 2003 President Bush released his fiscal year 2004 budget request for the U.S. Department of Education and federal education programs. The budget provides an average increase of 5.6% over 2003 levels or an increase of \$2.8 billion. However, 2003 levels are still being negotiated. ASHA encourages members to contact Congress and urge the legislators to fully fund IDEA funding.

President Bush has requested a \$75 billion increase for 2004 for the Reading First and Early Reading First Literacy Programs. The combined federal commitment to these programs is \$1.15 billion. This is especially significant for ASHA members that work in the schools as speech-language pathologists have become recognized as having an extremely important role in the area of literacy.

President Bush has included in his 2004 budget proposal to substantially increase the amount of loan forgiveness from \$5,000 to \$17,500 for math, science, and special education teachers who meet the definition of highly qualified in the *No Child Left Behind Act* and that serve in high-need schools. ASHA is working with the Department of Education and Congress to include related service providers such as speech-language pathologists and audiologists in this program.

### **ASHA Legislative Council**

(SC legislative councilors are Martha McDade and Dr. Tamala Bradham)

Continuing efforts are being made to permanently repeal the \$1500 Medicare cap by ASHA's legislative council during visits with legislators on Capital Hill.

A position paper is being developed on multicultural issues that the ASHA legislative council will vote on at the spring meeting.

The ASHA financial planning board is looking at cutting expenses rather than increasing ASHA dues.

The legislative council approved a requirement that all ASHA publications list the highest degree earned by the author.

The ASHA legislative council continues to explore changes to the code of ethics concerning research.

**Scope of Practice Task Force**

An ad-hoc committee was formed April 13, 2002 at the SCSHA Team Building Meeting to study scope of practice issues. This task force is still being developed.