**2024 IATS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY WEEKS**

**February 19 – March 2**

**Background**

Many healthcare professions in the state have annual events and use them to advocate for their profession and ways healthcare for their patients and communities can be improved. The need to advocate for a profession or patients in the legislative arena is important and necessary as those who write the laws that define and control the practice of healthcare are not practitioners themselves. Thus, they need to hear from those who are providing healthcare to be informed on how potential or existing legislation impacts their constituents. As athletic training is not well understood by the general public or legislators, it is essential for athletic trainers to ensure our voice is consistently heard by elected officials.

In February of 2020, a group of athletic trainers representing the Iowa Athletic Trainers’ Society and athletic training students/faculty from Drake University went to the Capitol building in Des Moines to begin the process of starting an annual “Hit the Hill Day” for athletic trainers in the state. To provide an example of the benefit of this event, then IATS President Jason Viel and the faculty/students attending were able to meet with State Senator Cournoyer during that first Hill Day event. Senator Cournoyer had just come from a Sub-Committee Hearing and was discussing loan forgiveness for OB-GYN physicians who move to rural parts of the state. She asked if athletic trainers would be interested. That meeting at Hill Day helped spark a conversation President Viel used as a foundation for additional conversations with Senator Cournoyer which led to athletic trainers being added to the student loan forgiveness program in the state of Iowa.

Additionally, while it was not due to Hill Day, athletic trainers in the state had a legislative win in the fall of 2023 due to legislative advocacy. The Board and Commission Review Committee (BCRC) made a recommendation on September 1 to eliminate the Board of Athletic Training and eliminate the need for licensure to practice athletic training in the state. Due to an overwhelming number of emails from athletic trainers and supporters, attendance of many athletic trainers at legislative fundraisers, and an appearance by 3 athletic trainers (IATS President Vic Miller, IATS President-Elect Nate Newman, and Iowa State Associate Athletic Director Mark Coberley) at a hearing, the BCRC’s final recommendation included the preservation of athletic training licensure.

In short, legislative advocacy is essential for furthering our profession in this state. The upcoming Hill Day will be another opportunity to continue to support and advance athletic training in Iowa.

**2024 Event**

The 2024 Hill Day will be the largest to date for athletic trainers. As the Lobbyists retained by IATS always say, communication and building relationships are key to helping move the profession forward legislatively. There are two parts to this event:

1. Students, faculty, and IATS Executive Committee members traveling to the capitol and meet with legislators and our lobbyists for a Hill Day.
2. A table will be set up in the rotunda in the capitol and will be staffed by athletic training students and faculty and members of the IATS Executive Committee. The presence of this table will allow for additional walk-up conversations to occur and expand our reach to legislators during the event.
3. Athletic trainers from around the state are encouraged to engage with their legislators through email and conversations on the local level participating in a legislative advocacy week.

**Information on Legislative Advocacy Weeks**

1. If you have never contacted your representative or senator this is a good chance to introduce yourself. Simply email them to introduce yourself, indicate you are an athletic trainer or athletic training student, and are willing to provide input on issues related to athletic training, sport safety, and health and wellness of athletes in high schools. You can also provide them with our talking points sheet to educate them about our profession. There is an example below.
2. If you have contacted your legislator previously, reach out to them and provide them with some updates on the profession. What changes are occurring? What challenges is the profession facing that could be helped by them? What have you done or seen another athletic trainer do to help Iowans? Talking points will be provided in late January.
3. Follow your legislator on social media and sign up for their newsletter.
4. Find a local event they have to attend. These go by many names and are usually promoted on their social media, the local chamber of commerce, or local news.
5. Attend the local event. They will usually have some remarks to make about the legislative session and then take questions. Feel free to participate as you want. However, do make sure you get to shake their hand and introduce yourself to them prior to or after the event. The 30 seconds you will likely get are very valuable and place a face to a name. Have an elevator speech prepared with the key bills or issues that you want to discuss. Then let them ask follow up questions. We will update you on the key bills and issues as the legislative session begins. Remember March is National Athletic Training Month. Promote the 2023 theme. Review the NATA’s webpage for additional information, themes, or suggestions in what you might bring up with your legislator. <https://www.nata.org/advocacy/public-relations/national-athletic-training-month>
6. Get a photo with your legislator. Post on social media using the hashtag, #legislATor and tag them. @IowaATSociety (Twitter) Iowa Athletic Trainers’ Society (Facebook).
7. Finally, if you wish, invite them to your workplace to see athletic training in action. Keep in touch with them throughout the legislative session as issues arise.

We want to thank you in advance for helping IATS with these events. Without grassroots involvement and ATs contacting their legislators, we will not be as successful in advancing legislation that can help or defeating legislation that can hurt our profession and patients.

**Contacting A State Legislator**

To Find Your Legislator

<http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>

Writing Effective Letters to State Legislators

Writing to your state legislators is an efficient and effective way of letting them know what you think about issues or bills. It can even be fun!

Below you will find templates of letters to legislators. Use it as a guideline but remember that a personal letter – one that tells your representative or senator how you feel about a particular issue – has the greatest impact. An elected official usually counts one personal letter from a constituent as representative of many other voters!

Sample Introductory Email

Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_,

I am one of your constituents in District XX. I am writing to introduce myself. I am (introduce yourself, e.g., athletic training student at xxx, athletic trainer at xxx).

I would like to offer to be assistance on any issues related to xxx (e.g., athletic training, athlete health and safety, or other areas you feel comfortable providing input on).

Indicate a willingness to stay in touch with them on any issues that arise related to your profession.

Finally, wish them success in the new session.

Sincerely,

Name

Sample Email requesting to meet with them for Hill Day

Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_

(Introduce yourself first if you didn’t send an introduction email a few weeks ago)

In a few weeks, I will be part of a group of athletic trainers and athletic training students from the state that will be attending a Hill Day at the state capitol. On the morning/afternoon of February 29th, we will be in Des Moines to visit our legislators and discuss any pertinent legislation this year and have a chance to educate you on the profession of athletic training and the changes that are occurring. If you would have some time on that morning/afternoon between x and y to visit with me for just a few minutes, I would appreciate it. If that is possible, please provide me with a time and appropriate location to meet you at.

Sample Email to discuss an issue.

Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

I am an Athletic Trainer who resides in your district XXX. I am writing to you about House/Senate File #\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which would … (short synopsis of the bill). I am strongly opposed to/in favor of this bill and ask you to vote against/for House/Senate File #\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If the bill passes/is defeated, it will affect my profession/athletes/schools/etc. (explain how).Please let me know your position on House/Senate File #\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Smith

General Letter Writing Tips

* Form emails, letters, or postcards are not useful advocacy tools, legislators rarely respond positively to this type of letter writing campaign.

* Be brief and to the point. Try to limit your letter to one or two subjects. Include all bill titles and numbers whenever possible.
* Send your letter or email as soon as you hear about an issue or bill. If it comes up again later in the session, you can always write again or make a phone call.