I woke up this morning to a bright, sunny day in Texas and felt so proud to be living in our great state. Part of that pride comes from knowing we worked together with both our colleagues and legislators to create a sunset bill of which all Texans should be proud. It turned out well for both our patients and our profession. But, that wasn’t always a sure bet. I’m more convinced than ever that if Texas AGD had not been involved, and if we didn’t work closely with legislators and with others in organized dentistry, including dental anesthesiologists, periodontists, and pediatric dentists, the outcome would have been much different and far worse.

For example, imagine what it would have been like if the Sunset Advisory Commission’s original recommendation that a majority of the TSBDE members - the individuals responsible for regulating our profession - were non-dentists? What if onerous requirements were imposed on practices that provide portable anesthesia services? Or, what if inspection requirements focused more on the location rather than on the competency of the person administering the anesthesia?

Those were just a few of the proposals that could have been implemented if Texas AGD, working alongside others in our profession, hadn’t been a strong and persistent voice at the table.

**JOURNEY TO THE FINAL BILL**

From what I saw having been involved in the process, the sunset staff and the legislators who served on the Sunset Advisory Commission are dedicated and hardworking public servants who do a great job evaluating regulatory agencies in Texas. But, as good as they are they are not dentists and needed our input to filter through both the information and misinformation that was before them as they developed the sunset bill. I believe they could both see and feel our collective passion for doing the right thing for our patients, which is demonstrated by how many of our points of view can be found in the final bill that passed.

As we all know, there were highly-publicized and tragic anesthesia deaths and injuries that occurred in Texas over the past five years, as well as several high-profile issues at the TSBDE. We worked closely with all parties involved to create a bill that will improve patient safety without adversely affecting access to care.

Legislators sent a clear message that action was needed. But, some of their early proposed solutions - particularly those dealing with anesthesia issues - did not include viable solutions to the real problems and would have been difficult, if not impossible, to implement. Who knows what would’ve happened if we, along with others in organized dentistry, hadn’t taken the time to get involved. Fortunately, there were significant changes made to the bill by the legislators of the Sunset Advisory Commission as it went through the process, and the final product is one of which we can all be proud.

But, as a friend told me, the legislative process is a marathon…not a sprint. Yes, we got through the session in great shape, but now we will have to work closely with the new board appointees to make sure the will and intent of the legislature is reflected in new rules and regulations coming our way.
WE STILL HAVE A LOT OF WORK AHEAD OF US

Think about it like a football game…one where we have a comfortable lead at halftime, but there is still another half to play. Anything can happen.

Also, think of how much you have invested in your career. Getting involved in advocacy is a small investment. The policies that are being debated will have a significant impact on our profession and on our ability to care for our patients.

Over the years, many of us have stepped-up to meet with legislators and with staff; to testify at hearings; to attend TSBDE committee and board meetings; and, to study and provide comments on proposed TSBDE rules. If you have not had the opportunity to get involved, I challenge you to do so.

But, even if you don’t have the time, there are other ways to help. Make a donation to the TAGD advocacy program to help support TAGD’s involvement at the capitol and at regulatory agencies like TSBDE.

I give, and I challenge you to give.

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Thank You

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