



ASRS

American Society of
Retina Specialists

ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY
MID-YEAR FORUM 2026

April 15-18

The Westin Washington, D.C. Downtown

Instructions:

This nomination will be reviewed by leadership of the American Society of Retina Specialists. Please print legibly or type the information requested.

FELLOWSHIP PHYSICIAN PROGRAM DIRECTOR: PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION A
FELLOW NOMINEE: PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION B

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATION:

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is partnering with ophthalmic state, subspecialty and specialized interest societies and training programs to include members in training as special guests at the Academy's Mid-Year Forum 2026 through its ***Advocacy Ambassador Program***.

In its 2004 pilot year, 14 members in training attended the Mid-Year Forum. At the latest in-person Mid-Year Forum (2025) there were 220 Advocacy Ambassador Program participants sponsored by training programs and **56** societies - **40** state ophthalmology societies and **16** ophthalmic subspecialty/specialized interest societies.

As part of members in training participation in the Academy's *Advocacy Ambassador Program*, participants are expected to return to their training programs and present their experiences to their colleagues. Following the Mid-Year Forum, the American Academy provides them with a template PowerPoint presentation which they can modify and add their personal experiences. **The \$275 Mid-Year Forum registration fee is waived for members in training** (residents and those undergoing fellowship training).

A. Congressional Advocacy Day – Dinner Briefing & Congressional Visits **Wednesday, April 15 (Dinner Briefing) / Thursday April 16 (Congressional Visits)**

Congressional Advocacy Day (CAD) begins with a dinner briefing on Wednesday April 15. At this briefing, members in training will learn about the key priorities for ophthalmology and medicine which will prepare them for visits with U.S. senators, representatives and healthcare staff to present the concerns and positions of the Academy and the profession. These Congressional visits are arranged by the American Academy's Washington D.C. staff and are based on participants' home address zip code. When making these Congressional visits on Thursday, April 16, residents and fellowship trainees (Advocacy Ambassadors) will be joined by ophthalmologists from their area who are leaders in ophthalmic state, subspecialty or specialized interest societies who will serve as their mentors during the visits. **Following the CAD dinner briefing on Wednesday, all Advocacy Ambassador Program participants are invited for a special briefing and reception with American Academy leaders to meet each other and discuss any questions they may have.**

B. Politics, Policy and Practice Management Sessions (Thursday, April 16 – Friday, April 17)

Advocacy Ambassadors join all attendees at the *Opening Session* at 3:30 pm on Thursday, April 16 following Congressional Advocacy Day visits. On Friday, April 4, they attend a session dedicated to Ambassadors, *L.E.A.P. Forward*. Following the conclusion of *L.E.A.P. Forward*, Ambassadors again join all attendees at the *Closing Session* and luncheon. The Mid-Year Forum general sessions cover critical issues facing ophthalmology and also impart practical pearls for ophthalmologists to take back to their practices.

C. Council Meeting (Friday, April 17 – Saturday, April 18)

The Council serves as the advisory body to the Board of Trustees and provides recommendations for board action based on membership concerns. The Council is comprised of two groups: one representing state ophthalmology societies and another representing ophthalmic subspecialty and specialized interest societies. The Council brings recommendations to the Board via Council Advisory Recommendations (CARs). Following the Advocacy Ambassadors' participation in the Friday, April 17 *Capitol Hill Wrap Up* session for Advocacy Ambassadors, they are encouraged to participate as guests in the remainder of the Council meeting on Friday and Saturday. The Council meeting will conclude no later than 1:00 pm on Saturday, April 18.

D. Social/Educational Events

Wednesday, April 15

- Advocacy Ambassadors are invited to a special briefing/reception directly following the conclusion of the Congressional Advocacy Day dinner briefing. Ambassadors will have a chance to meet and ask questions of American Academy and state society leaders as well as members of the American Academy's Young Ophthalmologist (YO) Committee and YO Advocacy Subcommittee.

Thursday, April 16

- Advocacy Ambassadors are invited to participate at the Thursday luncheon on Capitol Hill at the Reserve Officers Association following their scheduled Congressional visits.
- The American Academy will specifically recognize Advocacy Ambassadors as special guests in attendance at the Mid-Year Forum during the *Welcome Reception and Dinner* at the Westin Downtown. The evening will provide an opportunity for Advocacy Ambassadors to mingle with state and national leaders in ophthalmology. Following the dinner, Advocacy Ambassadors are extended a special invitation to attend the Surgical Scope Fund reception for significant contributors at a much-reduced contribution level.

Friday, April 17

- ***L.E.A.P. Forward Session for Advocacy Ambassadors (Leadership, Engagement, Advocacy, Practice Management)***
The purpose of this 3 ½ hour session (8:00am – 11:30am) is to **Inspire** and **Engage** Advocacy Ambassadors to be active **leaders** in their practice setting, community, state ophthalmology society, and national and international organizations. The Mid-Year Forum provides an ideal setting for Ambassadors to network and interact with active leaders in our field. The curriculum will provide interactive discussions in 4 major areas: **Leadership**, **Engagement**, **Advocacy**, and **Practice Management**.

Friday, April 17 (Cont.)

- ***Capitol Hill Wrap Up Session for Advocacy Ambassadors***
Following their visits on Capitol Hill, Advocacy Ambassadors have the opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with American Academy & state leaders as well as meet members of the American Academy's YO Committee and YO Advocacy Subcommittee.
- Advocacy Ambassadors are extended a special invitation to attend the OPHTHPAC reception for significant contributors at a much-reduced contribution level.

Saturday, April 18

- Following the conclusion of the Council meeting, Advocacy Ambassadors are included in the closing luncheon.

SECTION A (to be completed by fellowship director or department chair)

NOMINEE PROFILE

Fellowship Program:

Name of Fellow Nominee:

Date (month/year) Fellow Began Fellowship Training

Date (month/year) Fellow Expected to Complete Fellowship Training

Nominee's Mailing Address:

Nominee's Phone: _____ Nominee's E-mail: _____

Please list the name(s) and the title(s) of the individuals submitting this nomination on behalf of your fellowship program.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

If this fellow from my program is selected to participate in the *Advocacy Ambassador Program*, I agree to allow time following the Mid-Year Forum for him/her to give a presentation to colleagues regarding his/her experiences and lessons learned.

Signature of Fellowship Director

Date

I. Please describe your interest in attending the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Mid-Year Forum 2026 in Washington, D.C., as a special guest, the *Advocacy Ambassador Program*.

- II. In a statement of no more than 200 words, please indicate why you should be selected by the American Society of Retina Specialists to participate as a sponsored guest in the *Advocacy Ambassador Program* including information on how you plan to contribute in the future to the advocacy efforts of the ASRS. The ASRS agrees to cover economy airfare made within 30 days of meeting, lodging, and related expenses. *Please attach your CV.*

Are you an AAO Member?* YES _____ NO _____

(*Note: Participants attending the Mid-Year Forum **must** be members of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. AAO membership is FREE for members in training and is completed by filling out an application form. The Academy membership application is available online at [Join the Academy - American Academy of Ophthalmology \(aao.org\)](http://Join the Academy - American Academy of Ophthalmology (aao.org)).

Are you an American Society of Retina Specialists Member?*

YES _____ NO _____

(*Note: The ASRS waives dues for fellow-in-training membership dues)

Have you been sponsored as an ambassador on this program in the past?

YES _____ NO _____

Have you applied for the program this year with any other organizations?

YES (please provide details) _____ NO _____

If selected, I agree to:

- a. Participate in **all** designated elements of the Mid-Year Forum.
- b. Provide a presentation at my training program regarding my experiences and lessons learned at the Mid-Year Forum.
- c. Provide ASRS a brief synopsis of my experiences at the Mid-Year Forum for publication in Retina FYI newsletter or other society publications.

Signature of Fellow Nominee

Date

Please return the completed nomination form and CV by February 1, 2026 at 11:59 PM (CT) to Joshua Friedman at joshua.friedman@asrs.org.