



T A P A
 TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF
 PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

PA Pulse

The heartbeat of TAPA

Bridging the Future of Healthcare

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Letter from the President

Thank you to everyone who voted for me in the recent TAPA elections, and for your confidence in selecting me to lead TAPA. I look forward to continuing the strong work of our last two presidents, Marie Patterson and Greg Cain, as we work to grow our profession in Tennessee and beyond.

I hope to see everyone at the TAPA conference this October. Conferences are not just about earning CME – they are about networking. So, I really encourage each of you to come in person to these annual TAPA meetings so that we can get to know each other better. By strengthening our relationships with one another, we can build our profession. Many of you might not be able to attend FallFest for the whole week, and that is fine. TAPA offers daily rates, so please try to attend for a couple of days – especially the beginning of the week when we will host our annual Legislative Luncheon on Monday, Oct. 6.

There are many fights facing our profession. Many physicians and hospitals see PAs as “extenders” but that does not adequately describe what we do. PAs are licensed healthcare providers who often see patients autonomously – and independently, in some states – who provide excellent clinical care to the patients we serve. And we need to keep fighting for the respect and compensation that we deserve in the healthcare arena.

On the legislative front, we expect to see many battles between providers and insurance companies in the coming years. Of utmost concern is the recent announcement by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee that they will begin cutting rates for PAs and APRNs. They have stated that they plan to reimburse PAs and APRNs at 85-percent of the physician fees, similar to what CMS does for Medicare reimbursement. This is ridiculous, and such cuts will put many rural providers, like me, out of business.

Reimbursement cuts will have a devastating effect on our profession. If hospitals and practices are receiving less money for PA services, then they will most likely start to cut PA salaries. We cannot let that happen. This is why it is so important for PAs to be members of TAPA – we need a strong organization that can work with other provider groups to push back on cuts by insurance companies.

So, thank you to everyone who is currently a member of TAPA. If your PA friends and coworkers are not currently TAPA members, please get them to

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Mission - TAPA's mission is to promote accessible, quality healthcare, and to advance the education, profession and practice of physician assistants in Tennessee.

Vision

Protecting and empowering the practice of physician assistants in Tennessee.

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join. If you would like to get involved in TAPA, please let me know and reach out to our Executive Director Katherine Moffat. And when you get to FallFest, please seek me out and share with me your concerns about the profession so that we can tackle them together.

Johnny Presley, PA-C
TAPA President



Register for FallFest today!

TAPA's CME Committee is hard at work planning an amazing FallFest conference, and they hope you will make plans to be there! If you come to FallFest regularly, we look forward to seeing you again in October. If you haven't been to FallFest, then this is the year to attend!

Breakout Sessions: TAPA is introducing new programming to give PAs the opportunity to choose the educational programming that will best fit their needs. Each of the breakout sessions will offer three tracks to choose from: A clinical track that will provide medical lectures, a professional track that will provide PAs with insight into developing career paths, and a clinical skills track that will give PAs hands-on training to refresh their clinical skills.

Workshops: Again this year, FallFest will offer attendees the opportunity to renew their BLS and ACLS certifications. New this year is an Injections Workshop Injections Workshop which will allow attendees to become certified in musculoskeletal injections by a PAOS instructor. This is a great addition for new grads working in orthopaedics or experienced PAs seeking to expand their clinical skills.

Networking: A conference experience isn't complete unless you leave with new contacts. These contacts can lead to patient referrals, job

opportunities, and mentoring partnerships. So make new friends at the Welcome Reception on Monday afternoon, and attend the social event on Tuesday evening at Anakeesta. Throughout the week, be sure to attend the daily luncheons to network with fellow conference attendees.

Location: Gatlinburg, located at the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, provides a beautiful fall background to TAPA's annual conference. During your free time, explore one of the many hiking trails that the park has to offer. The Gatlinburg area also provides many fun attractions such as Dollywood, Ober Gatlinburg and Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies. And if you like to shop, there is the Craftsmen's Fair downstairs in the convention center or the Tanger Outlets in Sevierville with many great deals!

For more information about the conference, including registration forms and a conference agenda, visit www.tnopa.com/fallfest. We look forward to seeing you in October!

2025 AAPA House of Delegates Reports

The AAPA's House of Delegates (HOD) articulates the shared values, beliefs, and professional wisdom of PAs from all corners of the PA profession through the enactment of policies and adoption of position statements on behalf of the profession.

The 2025 House of Delegates (HOD) Meeting occurred Friday, May 16 through Sunday, May 18 in Denver, Co. Representing Tennessee were Chief Delegate Brendan Lucas, Tim Hudnall, William McCrary, Sarah Murawski, and Jodi Robbe. Following are reports from your delegates.

The AAPA has released the 2025 Summary of Actions which details the actions on each resolution - whether the resolution was adopted, adopted as amended, or rejected. [Click here to download a copy of this report.](#)

Chief Delegate Brendan Lucas

Greetings TAPA Members! AAPA 2025 has concluded, and I'm excited to share some of the actions taken by the House of Delegates this

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year. As a reminder, the House of Delegates generally adopts or rejects policies that establish the philosophical direction of AAPA.

Resolutions adopted by the House are not law and provide no legal or obligatory basis for practice; instead, they help direct AAPA staff in their work throughout the year. An example of this is the title change, which was adopted a few years ago. We, as PAs, can't represent ourselves as Physician Associates until our state adopts "Physician Associate" as the official title of the profession. Instead, that policy directed the Academy to increase work around the title change and advocate for updates at all levels.

Our Tennessee delegation brought lots of experience and involvement to the House this year – and for that, I'm incredibly proud. Having two new delegates (new to the House, not new to PAs) brought a wealth of knowledge from clinical practice and education, helping to diversify our thought processes and ensure we made the best decisions for the Academy.

One of our delegates also had the opportunity to serve on a reference committee, deliberating over testimony provided in the House, and ultimately issuing a recommendation on resolutions to the House for a final decision. We celebrate and thank Delegate Jodi Robbe for her service on Reference Committee B! She represented Tennessee well.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank Sarah Murawski for her leadership in the House. Her voice was loud and clear, ensuring Tennessee PAs were heard on the year's hot topics, positively influencing outcomes on resolutions in the House. She was a fantastic mentor to new delegates!

The Tennessee delegation divided the resolutions into different assignments, allowing each person to spend more time and become the "expert" on a smaller subset of resolutions. My subset of resolutions encompassed a range of topics, including harm reduction in the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD), burnout in the PA profession, antimicrobial resistance, health disparities, and health literacy.

While this subset was largely noncontroversial, updating language to align with current research, the most debated resolutions pertained to new



TAPA's 2025 delegates to the AAPA House of Delegates, from left to right: William "Brad" McCrary, Brendan Lucas, Sarah Murawski, Tim Hudnall, and Jodi Robbe.

policies supporting the full integration of individuals with a transgender gender modality, PAs practicing street medicine, and providing paid leave for PAs experiencing burnout and burnout-related medical conditions. The full summary of actions will be available for review on AAPA's website.

My involvement in the House of Delegates was split between leading the Tennessee delegation and serving as Chair of the Governance Committee for AAPA, which would be my final year in this role. As part of that work, I brought forward resolutions on bylaw changes that would enable optimal governance of AAPA in collaboration with other AAPA leaders. I also had the privilege of chairing the House Elections Committee, presiding over the House Elections, and hosting the Meet the Candidates Forum for the Board of Directors General Election.

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Finally, our Tennessee Delegation authored and read a Proclamation Resolution celebrating the 50th Anniversary of TAPA. Tennessee, Ohio, and Connecticut are all celebrating 50 wonderful years and presented similar proclamations before the House of Delegates. Click here to download a copy of that proclamation.

It was a pleasure and an honor to continue serving as Chief Delegate for Tennessee. On behalf of the Tennessee delegation, we thank you for the opportunity to serve and for ensuring that Tennessee PAs have a voice at the national level. For those delegates rolling off this year, we thank you for your service. For those continuing their service, we look forward to another productive House in 2026 in New Orleans!

Delegate Tim Hudnall

This was my first time serving officially as a delegate for the HOD for AAPA. I was a back-up delegate many seasons ago, but did not actually have to participate in the endeavor.

Having not been a part of the process, I was unclear of why it was important. But after spending three days deep in discussions, I understand the importance of these resolutions and how they not only advocate for our profession but help advance our practice abilities.

Being new to this, I was focused more on the process and understanding how it all worked. There were several controversial topics, which surprised me that some were more controversial compared to others. The doctoral degree, anything related to transgendered individuals,

TAPA Awards

TAPA is accepting nominations for the following awards:

- **PA of the Year**
- **PA Student of the Year**
- **Preceptor of the Year**
- **Educator of the Year**

Nominations are accepted from PAs, PA students, faculty and collaborating physicians. The submission deadline is **July 31**. Forms can be found at www.tnopa.com/awards.

and burnout seemed to be the hot topics. Several resolutions that I thought would be rather benign were extracted twice.

There was a lot of time spent on word-smithing which was a bit frustrating as it seemed we wasted time, but over all it seemed to make everyone more comfortable accepting the resolutions.

I was interested in the politics of the lobbying for individual group-sponsored resolutions. I recall a couple of discussions at our table from other CO organizations attempting to sway or gain acceptance of their amendments. It really did feel like a scaled down version of Congress.

Most of my interactions were with my delegate team, although I did see some familiar faces in the crowd and had some small discussions with them. Both NCCPA representatives were familiar faces since I had spent 20+ years being on or chairing the test committees.

TAPA worked with several other constituent organizations to work towards the passing or amending of their resolutions. I felt that my individual voting was very similar to the group's voting, I did appreciate the ability to self-think rather than being just a collective vote of our delegate group. It was also great to hear our TAPA resolution for the 50th anniversary being read by Chief Delegate Brendan Lucas.

Overall, it was a most interesting experience. It was challenging for sure. The long days, the back and forth discussions on some resolutions that seemed benign, and the general idea that we were ALL there to make our profession better. The professionalism of the speakers in running the event was fantastic. The procedure itself was beyond expectation. It is a positive idea that we are in good hands with the advocacy of our profession because of the workings of the HOD and the passion of those who participate.

Delegate William "Brad" McCrary

2025 was my first year in the AAPA House of Delegates. Arriving as a brand-new delegate gave me a front-row seat to the learning curve, and the very real impact that a single voice can have on the future of our profession.

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As the legislative compass of the profession, the House of Delegates is where practicing PAs, educators, students, and specialty organizations negotiate the policies that define AAPA's national stance. Every constituent has a voice and the ability to change policy.



Delegate McCrary addresses the AAPA House of Delegates.

I was a late addition to the delegation, so I did not receive a formal docket assignment. Even so, I attended all meetings, studied every reference-committee report, and spoke on the floor when I felt an amendment to policy needed to be made.

My primary focus became artificial intelligence resolutions, which centered on balancing innovation with reasonable oversight.

The most controversial issues discussed this year were:

Doctoral degree language: whether AAPA should endorse, remain neutral, or discourage a doctoral entry-level degree for PAs.

Recognition of robotic surgery as a "surgical subspecialty:" surprisingly divisive, the debate hinged on whether robotics was a subspecialty or simply a tool, like a stethoscope, of other surgeries.

Advocacy instruction for students: a single comment questioning students' experience triggered a wave of student testimony insisting that they already advocate effectively

I anticipated a battle over AI policy, yet consensus formed quickly after my amendment clarified disclosure thresholds. Conversely, the intensity of debate over robotic surgery wording, and the passionate response by students in regard to the advocacy resolution, surprised me.

Although I did not have formal sit-downs with named AAPA officers, I networked constantly with

delegates from multiple states, educators, and board members of state and national organizations. These conversations revealed that Optimal Team Practice progress in each state clearly shaped how delegates viewed scope-of-practice and supervision language.

The PA Compact proved pivotal in telehealth discussions, and in discussions about mandatory state membership, which many states who were part of the compact had concerns about, when PAs may be licensed in states they do not live in.

While my individual conversations did not directly rewrite any resolutions, beyond the one amendment I proposed, they kept Tennessee's priorities front-of-mind for other delegates.

Tennessee's voice was heard over multiple proposals. We made our stance clear and offered insight into policy, many times helping to shape the overall resolution. I submitted one formal amendment, seconded by Brendan Lucas, to Resolution 2025-A-12 on the use of AI in scholarship, which was endorsed by the chair of the Artificial Intelligence task force and successfully passed.

I learned several things from this experience. First, every delegate counts. Even without a docket assignment, well-prepared comments can reshape policy.

Second, parliamentary savvy matters. Knowing when to move, second, or request clarification can steer debate and lead to some unfortunate misunderstandings when done incorrectly.

Third, relationships drive results. Five-minute hallway chats often swayed more votes than two-minute microphones. And some policies were written by group effort over lunch to be successfully passed.

Fourth, students watch closely, and are just as valuable of a voice as the other PAs in the room.

And finally, clarity beats complexity. Policies succeed when they focus on protecting patients and supporting practice while avoiding unnecessary burden.

In short, my first year in the House was humbling, energizing, and a reminder that TAPA's

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active participation is essential to shaping policies that serve PAs and the communities we care for.

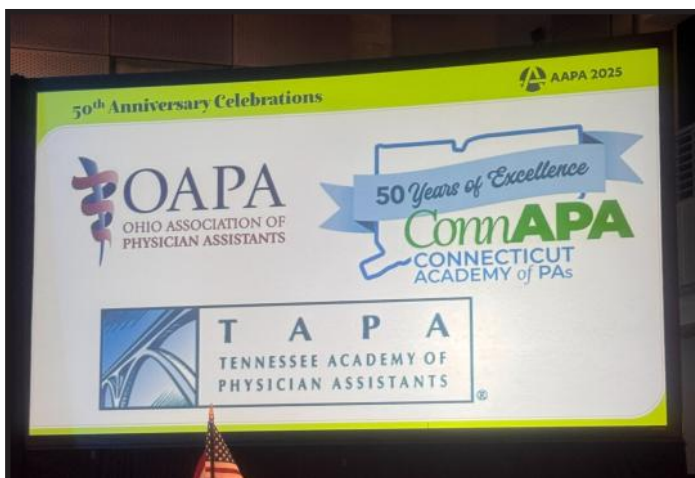
Delegate Sarah Murawski

This year, the Tennessee delegates of the HOD attended the AAPA meeting in Denver from May 16th to May 18th. I have been serving in the House of Delegates since I was a student and have been serving the state of Tennessee since 2019.

The House of Delegates is the governing body of the AAPA and helps to advise the Board of Directors on the actions PAs across the nation wish to see the AAPA accomplish. It is a great honor to serve in this body to represent the state of Tennessee and learn what issues are facing PAs across the nation and across specialties. Each year I serve in the HOD, I am inspired and encouraged about the future of our profession.

Several members of the AAPA gave reports at the beginning of our meeting. The top priorities for AAPA advocacy efforts this year remain PA modernization, PA title change, and the PA licensure compact.

Twenty-eight of the 125 constituent organizations of the AAPA have changed to "physician associate" title, including our Tennessee Academy. The AAPA has learned that state legislatures often follow the use of a new title in



TAPA's 50th anniversary is recognized at the AAPA's House of Delegates meeting.

professional academies before legislative change can occur. Three states have begun the process of changing their title in statute.

This September, the AAPA Leadership and Advocacy summit is taking place. PAs can attend to learn more about how to participate in advocacy on a greater level.

There was significant testimony and discussion around the constituent organizations, such as TAPA, in several of the resolutions this year. Across the country, constituent organizations are struggling with membership, which is hindering legislative efforts. Several solutions were discussed, one of which was educating students and practicing PAs on the importance of advocacy and advocacy skills. I hope to discuss this idea further with the Tennessee board of directors at our July meeting to investigate how we can help meet this need in our own state.

I worked extensively with several states (including New York, Texas, Virginia, California, and Wisconsin) to discuss policy supporting the investigation of an entry-level doctorate degree being awarded. Discussion around this included recognition of the significant rigor and breadth of current PA curricula and acknowledgement of increasing pursuit of post-graduate doctoral degrees. The several states working together were able to come to an agreement on exploring this pathway and this has now passed into AAPA policy.

Delegate Jodi Robbe

The 2025 American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA) conference was held in Denver. This was my seventh House of Delegates (HOD), I started in 2016, but I missed some conferences over the years.

This year had very robust debate, as the House always does. The debate can be lengthy, but it is important that before the AAPA makes a policy, all of the relevant (and some of the not so relevant issues) are thoroughly discussed. I have personally changed my mind about an issue based on the debate that occurred in the house.

This year, for the first time, I served on a Reference Committee. Once the resolutions are extracted from the consent agenda, they are

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discussed by delegates in the HOD, and the corresponding Reference Committee takes notes and then meets to try to ascertain the will of the House.

All of the non-extracted resolutions are then passed on the consent agenda. The Reference Committees then produce a new document that synthesizes the will of the house and offers recommendations for each extracted resolution (adopt, reject, amend).

If the will of the House was to amend, the amendment is incorporated into the document the Reference Committee produces. The Reference Committee is sequestered to discuss all of the testimony. It was a very lengthy process, requiring nine hours of deliberation to generate the document. The look "behind the scenes" to see how this process works was enlightening and improved my understanding of how the House process works. And I got to sit on the dais!

This enhanced knowledge of the processes of the house was very useful, as there were many new parliamentary actions taken this year that I had never seen before. Amendments were split, standing rules were removed from the consent agenda, and there were motions to postpone (not just table). There was even a challenge to the Speaker on a matter of parliamentary procedure.

Once again it was a great opportunity to connect with PAs from across the country who are passionate about our amazing profession. I am always humbled by the passion, dedication and brilliance of my PA colleagues from across the nation, but especially by the Tennessee delegation!

Thank you to TAPA's Institutional Members!

- Bethel University
- Lipscomb University
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Milligan University

2025 TAPA PAC Contributors

(Received Jan. 1-June 30, 2025)

If you haven't yet contributed to the PAC this year, please visit www.tnpa.com/political-action-

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