



T A P A
 TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF
 PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

PA Pulse

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From the President

For 49 years, TAPA has held its fall conference in Gatlinburg. And, we have all had a great time enjoying the mountains and everything that Gatlinburg offers. But now, for the first time ever, FallFest will be held in Nashville and the dates will span a weekend.

Why did TAPA make this change? First of all, Gatlinburg is a long drive for middle and west Tennessee PAs. Second, many PAs can't take time away from their practices when FallFest was scheduled from Monday through Friday. It is our hope that these changes make it easier for all Tennessee PAs to attend.

I really hope that all of you reading this are making plans to attend FallFest. I cannot stress enough the importance of meeting face-to-face with fellow PAs. These interactions between PAs are what strengthens our organization, and gets PAs involved in the leadership of TAPA.

In-person networking can be extremely beneficial to you and your practice. Networking can lead to new job opportunities, new partnerships with PAs who live near you or work in the same specialty, and patient referrals. Spending time with fellow PAs gives you the opportunity to learn more about what is happening within the profession and TAPA, and how you can help.

It is getting more and more difficult to practice in the healthcare arena, and we are all feeling the stress and feeling burnt out. However, we need to be there to support one another. Coming together to share the ups and downs of being a healthcare provider can help us identify ways to improve our practices.

Our profession is at a crossroad. Other states are adopting Optimal Team Practice and Title Change, and we are working hard to get those bills passed in our state. But, we cannot do that without a groundswell of support from ALL Tennessee PAs.

Additionally, while the number of licensees continues to climb in Tennessee, membership in TAPA remains flat. Many of those in leadership are getting older and are close to retirement. We need younger PAs to step up, join TAPA, engage with colleagues, and take on the leadership mantle to continue to fight for the future of this profession.

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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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For more information about the conference, see below. Mark your calendar for Oct. 22-25, and make plans to spend the weekend in Nashville. I look forward to seeing you there.

Johnny Presley, PA-C
TAPA President



Register today for FallFest 2026

TAPA's 50th Annual FallFest continuing medical education (CME) conference will be held Thursday, Oct. 22 through Sunday, Oct. 25 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, Tenn.

The conference will kick off on Thursday, Oct. 22 with concurrent workshops held throughout the day. Space is limited in each workshop to just 25 attendees, so register early to claim a spot! Gain hands-on experience in the following areas:

- Fundamentals of Aesthetic Neurotoxins
- Upper and Lower Extremity Physical Exam Lab
- Ultrasound Workshop
- BLS Certification/Recertification

The main agenda lectures will begin Friday morning and continue through Sunday afternoon, focusing on the newest advances in medicine, including the latest treatment guidelines and therapies.

For more information, visit www.tnpa.com/fallfest.

Register today, and we look forward to seeing you in October!

2026 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 2026 House of Delegates meeting took place from Friday, May 15 through Sunday, May 17 in New Orleans, La. Representing Tennessee were Chief Delegate Brendan Lucas, and delegates Paula Miksa, Sarah Murawski, Jodi Robbe and Johnna Yealy. Following are their reports.

The AAPA has released the 2026 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 2026 has concluded, and your TAPA delegates are home from The Big Easy! I'm excited to share some of the actions taken by the House of Delegates this year. As a reminder, the HOD establishes the philosophies of your Academy. These policies help direct the work of AAPA staff throughout the year.

Our Tennessee delegation brought lots of experience and involvement to the House this year, for which I'm extremely proud. We had the pleasure of adding two PA educators to our delegation. Paired with our seasoned delegates who have served for many years, your Tennessee delegation brought a wealth of knowledge and diverse thoughts to the House.

I also had the pleasure of serving on a reference committee, deliberating over testimony provided in the House, and ultimately issuing a recommendation to the House for a final decision. I want to personally thank Sarah Murawski, Jodi Robbe, Paula Miksa, and Johnna Yealy for their incredible work this year. I would argue the knowledge and expertise this group brought is unmatched!

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The resolutions I managed encompassed a variety of topics - from leadership pathways for PAs, to health equity and diversity in the profession, the monitoring of new health professions that mimic ours, to opposing certifications for surgical first assist - and the debate was robust! The newly developing professions mimicking the PA profession in other states raised eyebrows for many, calling attention and encouraging AAPA to monitor and help advocate for what's best for our profession.

I'm incredibly proud of the Tennessee delegates and thank them for their work and preparation for this year's House of Delegates. You can trust they served you well and made the best decisions as fiduciaries of AAPA.

As I wrap up my report, I can't express enough how much of an honor it has been to serve as the Chief Delegate for Tennessee. As many have likely already seen, I am running for Secretary-Treasurer for the AAPA Board of Directors. Pending the outcome of the election, though running unopposed, I intend to resign from my post as delegate to serve in this role. I plan to remain involved as much as possible with Tennessee and to assist wherever needed moving forward.

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 the delegates rolling off this year, we thank you for your service. For those continuing their service, we look forward to another productive House in 2027 in Phoenix!

Delegate Paula Miska

This year's AAPA House of Delegates meeting provided another valuable opportunity to participate in discussions that help shape the future of the PA profession. Having previously served two non-consecutive terms in the HOD, I continue to appreciate the importance of the House as a forum where PAs from diverse practice settings, specialties, and constituent organizations can have a voice in determining AAPA policy and priorities. The HOD not only influences the direction of the profession, but also provides insight into the issues that matter most to PAs across the country.



TAPA Delegates (left to right) Johnna Yealy, Jodi Robbe, Brendan Lucas, Paula Miksa, and Sarah Murawski represent Tennessee PAs at the AAPA's annual House of Delegates meeting.

I was assigned resolutions B17 through C7, many of which focused on updating existing policy papers to make them more concise and to remove references to outdated research. While much of the work involved policy maintenance, several topics generated significant debate.

Among the most discussed issues were the proposed Dual Membership Fellow Category, revisions to the PA Oath, particularly language regarding physicians, and the Philosophy of Practice resolution. In addition, the resolution regarding Longitudinal Advocacy Education Across the Entire PA Program prompted extensive discussion and strong opinions from delegates on multiple sides of the issue.

One of the most surprising aspects of this year's meeting was the level of passion surrounding the Longitudinal Advocacy Education resolution. I was also surprised by the opposition expressed toward the resolution supporting PAs as surgical assistants. I felt that some delegates who do not work in surgery may not fully appreciate the capabilities and responsibilities of surgical PAs.

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Although I did not have significant interactions with AAPA leadership or delegates from other states, I found my conversations with representatives from other constituent organizations, particularly the Association of Doctoral Physician Associates (ADPA), to be both informative and beneficial.

Having previously served in the HOD, as Professional Advisor to the AAPA Student Board, and as the Student HOD Advisor, I especially enjoyed watching the student delegates actively participate in the proceedings. Their engagement and professionalism were encouraging and demonstrated the strength of the profession's future leadership. Overall, the experience reinforced the importance of involvement in organized medicine and provided valuable insight into the ongoing discussions that continue to shape the PA profession.

Delegate Sarah Murawski

This is my 8th year serving in the AAPA House of Delegates and 6th year serving Tennessee PAs. Each year, I am reminded of the passion that I started this career with. It was a joy to return to New Orleans, the location of the first House of Delegates that I was able to serve with our Chief Delegate, Brendan Lucas, as a student in 2018.

On the first day of the meeting, we heard reports from the AAPA, including a report on the recent final ruling by the Department of Education, limiting federal funding available for PA students. The AAPA president reported that a survey of current PA students showed that 1 in 3 students would not have pursued a healthcare career under the current loan restrictions. The AAPA reported that they remain committed to removing barriers to practice, including the limit on student

loans. Our AAPA President reported that the AAPA is pursuing legal action against the Department of Education to fight this final ruling.

In better news, the AAPA CEO reported that she met with the CEO of the American Medical Association for the first time ever and discussed the importance of PA work within the medical field. The AMA CEO next plans to meet with the State Legislative Team at the AAPA. This is a HUGE step toward a more collaborative medical workforce and advocacy efforts.

Resolutions this year had a lot of focus around diversity, equity, and inclusion. There was a lot of debate around the political and funding implications of keeping our DEI committee or renaming it. There was a lot of testimony stating that the AAPA should not bend to political pressures and reaffirm our commitment to DEI.

The House of Delegates also updated the PA oath to realign better with current practices and OTP efforts. Resolutions pertaining to the removal of Board of Directors officers were sent back to a task force for further work.

Many state chapters discussed difficulty in getting members and therefore funds to complete the advocacy work they are trying to achieve. One resolution focused on a special dual membership category for the AAPA that recognized those who are members of a state and the AAPA. This was referred to a task force to evaluate if this is the best tactic to improve engagement in the state organizations. Another resolution sought to define the philosophy of PA practice. This was also sent to a task force for further work and consideration.

Delegate Jodi Robbe

New Orleans was a great host city for the 2026 AAPA House of Delegates. This was the sixth AAPA annual conference to be held in New Orleans and the second time I have been to the conference in New Orleans. It's always great to be part of the House of Delegates and help with the important mission of setting the policies and position statements for the American Academy of Physician Associates. It's also an amazing experience to connect with PAs from across the county and all over the world and hear about the incredible things that PAs are doing every day.

Thank you to TAPA's Institutional Members!

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

HOD, continued from page 4

I prepared for the HOD by reviewing some of the assigned resolutions in depth, and then reviewing the rest on several phone calls with the Tennessee delegation. The resolutions I reviewed covered many topics, including establishing a new philosophy of practice for PAs and offering tax credits for PAs who precept students.

The new limits on federal student loans for PAs were also discussed. As always, there was robust debate on the resolutions with lots of discussion about how the resolutions would impact the PA profession and our patients. The topic of increasing membership was also discussed, as all constituent organizations and AAPA itself are always hoping to grow their membership.

Some of the resolutions from the HOD will result in task forces to address the issues. Volunteering to participate in a task force is a great way to have a voice in how APPA approaches these topics.

I am a member of the governance review task force that is examining how AAPA governs itself and how well the members are engaged and represented in that. The 2025 HOD started this task force and it will issue a report to the 2027 HOD in Phoenix Arizona.

Delegate Johnna Yealy

During the 2026 AAPA House of Delegates meeting, I had the opportunity to serve as a Tennessee delegate for my first year in the HOD. Although this was my first time serving, I found the experience valuable and hope to continue participating in future years.

The HOD process is important because it allows practicing physician associates/assistants and educators from across the country to help shape national policy, professional priorities, and the future direction of the profession through collaborative discussion and debate.

This year, I reviewed resolutions C8–C18. Many of the resolutions involved policy language revisions and updates intended to make policies more sustainable and applicable over time. My primary focus during review was recommending revisions that reduced reliance on language tied to a single research source and refining policy

statements to ensure they remained practical and adaptable as evidence and professional needs evolve.

The most controversial discussions this year centered on proposals related to advocacy curriculum within PA education programs and the removal of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) language from certain resolutions. These discussions reflected the wide range of perspectives currently present within the profession and highlighted the importance of thoughtful dialogue within the HOD process.

One particularly valuable aspect of the meeting was the opportunity to interact with PA leaders and educators from outside Tennessee, including members of the international PA educator community. I participated in discussions with international PA educators who provided insight related to the vote concerning the PA title in the United States and how those decisions may influence international PA development and recognition efforts. These interactions reinforced the broader impact of AAPA policy decisions beyond individual states and demonstrated the importance of collaboration across organizations and professional communities.

TAPA did not co-sponsor or amend resolutions this year; however, the experience provided important insight into the policy development process and the complexity of balancing advocacy, professional identity, education, and sustainability within national policy decisions. Overall, serving in the HOD strengthened my understanding of the profession's governance structure and the role delegates play in representing both their state organization and the broader interests of the PA profession.

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.tnpa.com/awards.

See you at FallFest 2026!

TAPA's annual fall conference has so many things to offer to PAs and PA students - from hands-on workshops to inspiring awards presentations to the Student Challenge Bowl and legislative updates, there is something for everyone!



2026 TAPA PAC Contributors

(Received Jan. 1-June 30, 2026)

If you haven't yet contributed to the PAC this year, please visit www.tnpa.com/political-action-committee to make either a one-time donation or sign up for monthly donations.

Bridge Members

contributing \$250+

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- *Melissa Watson
- *Johnna Yealy

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contributing \$100-\$249

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contributing up to \$100

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