



**T A P A**  
 TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF  
 PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

# PA Pulse

*The heartbeat of TAPA*

*Bridging the Future of Healthcare*

Official publication of the Tennessee Academy of Physician Associates

Vol. 32, No. 1, March 2026

## *In this issue*

**From the President..... 1**

**Legislative Update..... 2**

**TAPA PAC Contributors ..... 4**

**PA Day on the Hill..... 5**

## **From the President**

It is hard to believe that the first quarter of 2026 is already behind us. It has been a busy year so far, particularly in the legislative arena. TAPA has been working hard on several bills this session, and I want to thank everyone who attended TAPA’s PA Day on the Hill this year. It was a great event, and PAs and students really made an impact on legislators. Be sure to read the Legislative Update in this issue of the newsletter by our executive director Katherine Moffat.

For many years, TAPA has been working hard on behalf of all Tennessee PAs to improve PA practice in our state. In 2021, we successfully fought for an independent Board of PAs. In 2024, we made progress toward Optimal Team Practice (OTP) and got the PA scope of practice spelled out in Tennessee law.

This year, we had the governor’s support for full OTP through the state’s application for the federal Rural Health Transformation program. But, we continue to face strong opposition by Lt. Gov. Randy McNally. The good news is that Sen. McNally is retiring, and there will be new leadership in the Senate next year - leadership that will likely be more pragmatic about modernizing PA practice in order to expand access to care to all residents in our state, which makes me optimistic about future legislative wins.

The fact is, a lot of this work has been done by a small group of passionate and hardworking PAs. If we want to see more success in our efforts, we need more PAs to be engaged with TAPA. If you have been busy with your practice and not engaged with TAPA, I encourage you to consider the following.

1. **Be a member of TAPA.** Many of you are members – which is appreciated - and we need you to continue to renew your membership. If you are a member, talk to your PA colleagues and ask them to join TAPA. If you are not a TAPA member, we need you to join ASAP.

Right now, only about 25 percent of licensed PAs are members of TAPA. Membership dues are the life blood of our organization. Membership dues give us the resources we need to hire lobbyists and professional staff. If we can increase membership to even 50 percent of licensed PAs, we would have the money to engage in more public relations to promote the profession to the public and support practicing PAs.

*See President, page 2*

*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.*

President, continued from page 1

2. **Volunteer with TAPA.** As I mentioned above, a small group of PAs is doing all of the work for the profession. People get burned out if they don't have help.

Elections are happening right now for the following positions: Regional Directors – Knoxville, Jackson and Memphis and three (3) of the allotted five (5) delegates to the AAPA House of Delegates. **Self-nominate by April 15 to get on the ballot.**

Or, join a committee. TAPA's Membership Committee, CME Committee, and Government Affairs Committee are always looking for members. Send an email to [info@tnpa.com](mailto:info@tnpa.com), and we will get you plugged in.

3. **Set up a meeting with local legislators.** This is an election year, and candidates are looking for votes – and money. Even a small donation of \$50 to a campaign gets you on a candidate's mailing list. Once you are on that list, you'll start getting emails about campaign events.

Go to every event that you can so that these candidates know your face and name. Bring your family, friends, and colleagues. Talk to them about PA practice and what you do. Support those candidates that support PAs.

4. **Donate to the PAC.** TAPA's Political Action Committee (PAC) makes campaign contributions to candidates that support PAs. These contributions are important because they get the attention of future legislators and get TAPA a seat at the table when decisions get made. You can sign up to make monthly donations on your credit card using this form: [tnpa.memberclicks.net/pac-donation-form](https://tnpa.memberclicks.net/pac-donation-form)

### Thank you to TAPA's Institutional Members!

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

5. **Attend FallFest.** Finally, make plans to attend FallFest this year, scheduled for Oct. 22-25, 2026. TAPA's CME Committee has moved the conference to Nashville and changed the conference dates from a Monday-Friday format to a Friday-Sunday format, with workshops on Thursday.

It is our hope that this central location and weekend dates will make it easier for Tennessee PAs to attend. The conference is where important things happen – PAs engage with TAPA leadership, PAs looking to get involved can find their place, and deep bonds of friendship form between colleagues.

If you have any questions or concerns about TAPA, please reach out to me or Katherine.

*Johnny Presley, PA-C*  
TAPA President

## Legislative Update

*By Katherine Pesut Moffat, TAPA Executive Director*

This legislative session has been very busy, with TAPA working on three different pieces of legislation affecting PA practice in Tennessee. Below is an overview and update for each bill.

**SB2243 (Johnson)/HB2555 (Lamberth) – Rural Health Transformation Program.** This bill implements changes that were promised to the federal government last year in Tennessee's Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program grant application. This bill addresses PA practice in our state and would move PAs to full Optimal Team Practice. Highlights of the bill include:

- Grant funding was awarded in December by the federal government, based upon the plans laid out in the state's application. Passage of this bill is necessary to prevent any claw back of funding by the federal government.
- Passage of this bill positions Tennessee to be scored higher in future years under the RHT program, making the state eligible for a higher portion of the discretionary RHT funds.

*See Legislative, page 3*

Legislative, continued from page 2

- Finally, removing practice barriers will enhance PA practice in Tennessee and expand access to care for all patients across the state, improve outcomes, and strengthen the healthcare workforce.

**Bill Status:** TAPA was extremely disappointed to see SB 2243, which implemented the section of the governor's RHT grant application regarding PAs, referred to the Senate Health and Welfare's General Subcommittee. What does that mean? Referring the bill to General Sub is a maneuver to kill a piece of legislation. So, the bill is essentially dead for this year. This is a huge disappointment because the votes were there to get the bill out of committee.

This is a setback, not a defeat. There are still a lot of legislators who support this bill and want the funding tied to it from the federal government. Many legislators will be facing primary opponents this fall, and Tennesseans will be electing a new governor who will oversee the final four years of the RHT grant cycle.

This summer and fall, TAPA will be meeting with legislative and gubernatorial candidates to explain to them why it is important to support this bill and the RHT program. If you are able to host a legislative meeting, please reach out to the TAPA office at [info@tnpa.com](mailto:info@tnpa.com).

**SB2155 (Watson)/HB2619 (Howell) - Patients First Act.** This bill responds to longstanding concerns raised by patients, providers, and employers regarding health insurance. Too often, insurance decisions that affect access to care and financial stability are made through opaque processes, unilateral contract changes, and the increasing use of automated systems with little accountability. This legislation puts reasonable guardrails in place to restore balance and trust in the health insurance system.

- The bill prohibits improper downcoding and ensures providers are paid for the services they actually provide to patients.
- The bill promotes fair reimbursement across provider types, prohibiting insurers from

See Legislative, page 4

**TEACH. LEAD. INSPIRE. REPEAT.**

*Because the Future of Healthcare Starts With You.*

**Bethel**University



*Great clinicians do more than treat patients – they shape tomorrow's providers.*

**ONE PRECEPTOR. ONE STUDENT.  
ONE COMMUNITY TRANSFORMED.**

**Become a Clinical Preceptor with Bethel University's PA Program – Paris, TN**

When you precept with Bethel, you're not adding another task – you're building the healthcare workforce your community depends on.

## BENEFITS

**Stipend:** \$1,000 per student per five-week rotation

**Category II CME:** Hours awarded equal to hours precepted



**Ready to Shape the Future?**

*Let's Begin.*



[pa-clinical@bethelu.edu](mailto:pa-clinical@bethelu.edu) | 731.407.7666

Leanna Brown, Clinical Director

*Legislative, continued from page 3*

denying or reducing payment solely based on licensure classification when services are within a provider's scope of practice and reimbursed for others. This provision prevents discriminatory reimbursement while preserving existing scope-of-practice laws.

**Bill Status:** SB2155 was placed on the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee calendar for Tuesday, March 17. However, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee has not met since March 10. The committee is scheduled to meet on April 7, and this bill is on that meeting's agenda. HB 2619 passed out of the House Insurance Committee and the House Government Operations Committee. It has been referred to the House Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee, and is expected to remain there until the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee takes action on the Senate companion bill.

**SB2548 (Reeves)/HB2044 (Marsh) – Certified Medical Assistants.** This bill clarifies that PAs are permitted to delegate medication administration to a certified medical assistant (MA).

- The original enabling legislation allowed physicians and nurses to delegate medication administration to MAs, but it erroneously omitted PAs.
- In many practice settings, PAs work closely with MAs and routinely need to delegate tasks to these certified practitioners. This bill makes it clear that PAs have that authority in Tennessee.

**Bill Status:** SB2548 and HB2044 have both passed their respective chambers and has been sent to the governor for his signature.

Once the legislative session concludes and campaign season begins, TAPA representatives will start meeting with legislators and candidates. If you are a PA program interested in hosting a legislative tour, or if you would like to host a legislator meeting at your clinic, please reach out to me through the TAPA office at [info@tnpa.com](mailto:info@tnpa.com).

## 2026 TAPA PAC Contributors

*(Received Jan. 1-March 31, 2026)*

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

### Sustaining Members

*contributing \$100-\$249*

Lezlie Burden  
Suzanne Bugar  
\*Patrecia Eaton  
\*Jennifer Light  
\*James Montag, Jr.  
Charles Powell, III  
\*Melissa Watson  
\*Johnna Yealy

### Contributing Members

*contributing up to \$100*

\*Donald Black  
Richard Heint  
\*Allison Jowers  
Kimberly Lay  
\*Joseph Lindahl  
\*Paula Miksa  
\*Sarah Murawski  
Karly Neff  
\*Johnny Nowlin  
\*Leigh Anne Monaghan  
\*Vincent Proctor  
\*Jodi Robbe

### \*Recurring donors

## 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](http://www.tnpa.com/awards).

# PA Day on the Hill 2026

Thank you to everyone who attended PA Day on the Hill this year. We had more than 250 PAs and students in attendance, and they met with 80+ legislators. This annual event shines a light on PA practice for Tennessee decision makers as they learn about how PAs are educated and how they care for patients in communities across Tennessee.



# **FALLFEST**

**IS MOVING TO**

# **NASHVILLE**

**IN 2026!**



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**OCTOBER 22–OCTOBER 25**

For more details, visit [tnpa.com/fallfest](https://tnpa.com/fallfest)