

## First-ever 'RT in JC' a big success!

The MSRT Board of Directors would like to thank everyone who braved the winter storm to attend the first-ever 'RT in JC' event on Feb. 2. More than 150 radiologic science professionals attended the meeting and legislative visits.

The day began with registration/breakfast/T-shirts. After breakfast, Christine Lung, the Director of Government Relations for the ASRT, was our featured speaker. Christine spoke on various legislative topics, including the legislative process, how an idea becomes a law, how to lobby your issue, and many more. She did role-playing with members of the audience, simulating both "good" and "bad" legislators. She worked specifically with the student issues in lobbying; we would like to thank the brave students from Rolla Technical Center and Cox for being the guinea pigs for that demonstration! A question and answer session followed.

After lunch everyone went over to the Capitol. We began our efforts with a group photo in the Rotunda. Then the real work began! Everyone got an information packet, T-shirt, and mug for the legislator they were visiting and went to lobby. We had great success! Everyone was well received and our issue was taken seriously.



### *RT in JC*

Members of the MSRT delegation met with Missouri senators Feb. ??? at the first "RT in JC" Legislative Day. Back row, from left: Sen. Kennedy, Samara Moore, Anne Rutz, Heather Brown, Martin Henson and Sen. Steelman. Front row, from left: David Frazier and Tammy Decker.

In the House, we gathered a few more cosponsors for our bill and many assurances of support and votes. In the Senate, Sen. Kennedy from the St. Louis area invited members of the MSRT Board onto the floor of the Senate. He has introduced companion legislation in the Senate, which is cosponsored by Sen. Steelman

(Rolla) and Sen. Wheeler (KC).

All-in-all RT in JC was a huge success and we hope that even more people can attend in the future. For right now, however, it is even more important to write letters to your legislators encouraging them to support and cosponsor the legislation!

***Do you care about CARE? See related stories, page 2-4.***

# R.T.s gather on Capitol Hill to gain support for CARE bill

By Ceela McElveny

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 100 of radiologic technology's most dedicated advocates gathered in the nation's capital on Monday to kick off the ASRT's sixth annual R.T. in D.C. meeting. The two-day lobbying event is designed to generate Congressional support for the Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence bill, which was introduced last year as H.R. 1214 in the House and S. 1197 in the Senate.

The R.T.s spent March 8 learning how to communicate effectively with their legislators in preparation for March 9 meetings with the senators and representatives from their home states. Technologists learned that smooth talking and quick thinking aren't the most important traits of a good lobbyist. It's persistence.

The meeting got under way with a presentation by D.C.-based consultant Stephanie Vance, who trained technologists in lobbying techniques. In her presentation, "Effective Advocacy: From Grass-roots to Grass-tops and Everything in Between," she reminded R.T.s that the legislative process can be frustratingly slow. "About 10,000 bills are introduced during a Congressional session, and only 5 percent of them become law," she said.

To increase the profile of the CARE bill, which was first introduced in 1998, Ms. Vance encouraged the technologists to develop and fine-tune a five-minute message, warning them that that was the average amount of time they would have in a lawmaker's office.

She also gave them the opportunity to practice their message in front of each other before taking it "live" in front of a legislator.

Ms. Vance reminded the technologists to make their message personal, thoughtful, relevant and specific. "If possible, tell a story about a patient. Describe how the CARE bill would benefit him or her."

This marks the first year that the ASRT has hosted the R.T. in D.C. meeting in collaboration with the Society of Nuclear Medicine Technologist Section. Eight SNMTS members, including President Lyn Mehlberg, B.S., CNMT, FSNMTS, attended. While at the meeting, Ms. Mehlberg gave a brief update on SNMTS efforts in the legislative and regulatory arena, as well as on a planned PET-CT curriculum and certification exam.

The CARE bill would enforce the Consumer-Patient Radiation Health and Safety Act of 1981, which encouraged states to establish educational and certification standards for medical imaging and radiation therapy personnel. The 1981 law is a "toothless mandate," said ASRT lobbyist Dave Goch, because it does not include an enforcement mechanism. The CARE bill would require states to enforce federal minimum standards or risk losing federal reimbursement for medical imaging examinations and radiation therapy procedures.

The technologists were encouraged to target legislators who are members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee

and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, since those are the committees that will hold hearings on the bill.

Christine Lung, ASRT director of government relations, said an important target this year is to get 28 members of the Energy and Commerce Committee signed onto the CARE bill and at least 12 members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. "That's half of each committee plus one," she explained.

Of particular need for the CARE bill is more Republican cosponsors for the Senate version, which was introduced by Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo. Of the 10 cosponsors on the Senate bill, nine are Democrats.

"Help us get a few more Republican cosponsors on this bill," urged Sen. Enzi's health policy analyst Steve Northrup, who addressed the group during a luncheon. "The senator wants to move this legislation forward, but the only way he can do so is with bipartisan support."

Although they were in Washington, technologists continually were reminded to think about home. "Don't leave Washington thinking your job is done," said Ms. Lung. "The R.T. in D.C. meeting is a once-a-year event, but grass-roots advocacy requires a continuous commitment."

ASRT President-elect Dawn Fearn agreed. "Carry the message about the CARE bill not just to Capitol Hill, but home to our co-workers and patients," she said.

*Courtesy of the ASRT*

# R.T.s call on Congress to ensure patient safety

By Ceela McElveny

WASHINGTON, D.C. –

Dressed in white lab coats and armed with examples of poor x-ray images, more than 100 radiologic technologists from around the country trekked the halls of Congress on March 9 to gain lawmaker support for the Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence bill.

The technologists, who were in town for ASRT's annual R.T. in D.C. meeting, visited nearly 300 congressional offices during a 10-hour marathon on Capitol Hill.

By day's end, ASRT Director of Government Relations Christine Lung pre-

dicted that the R.T.s' hard work would boost the number of House cosponsors for the CARE bill to more than 90. The House version of the bill, H.R. 1214, had 74 cosponsors going into the R.T. in D.C. meeting.

The CARE bill would set federal minimum standards of education and certification for personnel who deliver radiation therapy and perform all types of medical imaging examinations, except sonography. Currently, people with no education or experience can be hired to perform radiologic examinations in 12 states.

And even in the 38 states where the profession is regulated, laws vary widely. "In Washington, anyone who pays \$35 and watches a seven-hour AIDS video can obtain a license to take x-rays," Pamela Lee, M.Ed.,

R.T.(R)(CT)(QM), told Milt Reimers, the legislative assistant for Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash. "That's why we need the federal government to step in and set a minimum requirement."

Joining R.T. in D.C. this year were three radiography students – Cherish Dow from Washington, Keith Lott from Mississippi and Melissa Mace from Missouri. The students said they were thrilled to participate in the grass-roots event. "I'd love to do

this every year," said Ms. Dow, who then quickly corrected herself by adding, "but the CARE bill is going to pass this year, right? So we won't need to come

back."

But ASRT lobbyist Dave Goch, who is with the D.C. law firm Webster, Chamberlain and Bean, reminded technologists that the legislative process can be a long, slow journey. "More than 8,000 bills have been introduced so far during this session of Congress, with more to come. The CARE bill isn't just a small fish in a big pond; it's a small fish on the autobahn."

Still, optimism was high among most technologists. "There's a strong feeling on the House side of the Capitol that the CARE bill will move through committee and be heard on the floor of the House this year," reported Gary Duehring, Ph.D., R.T.(R)(M), of Michigan.

As part of this year's R.T. in D.C. meeting, the ASRT presented an Award for Excellence in Radiologic Sciences Advocacy to the

bill's Senate sponsor, Mike Enzi, R-Wyo.

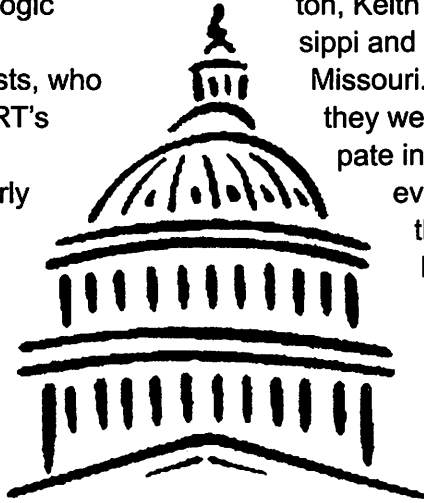
When he introduced the bill in the Senate in June 2003, Sen. Enzi said, "What would you say if you knew that the individual helping to direct your course of treatment is someone who has done nothing more to earn his or her credentials than spend a few weeks getting some on the job training? Unfortunately, that's an all too common occurrence with the present state of our health care system."

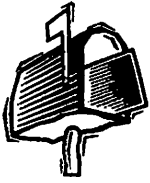
The ASRT presented a second award to Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa., a House cosponsor of the CARE bill. "Patients' lives are often riding on the outcomes of these procedures, and it is the height of irresponsibility to allow individuals to do this work without proper training," Rep. Doyle said recently.

That was the same message R.T.s worked to drive home in every congressional office they visited. In the office of Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., legislative assistants listened carefully as constituents Bev Niewohner, R.T.(R); Karen Prouty, R.T.(R); and Randy Prouty, R.T.(R), displayed samples of poor quality x-ray films. The images were taken before 1993, when Nebraska began licensing radiologic technologists.

One exam, of a child's clavicle, was performed on a 14x17 piece of film that captured everything from the child's sinuses to her lower ribs. "This little girl was overexposed to radiation because the person who took this image had no idea what they were doing," Ms. Niewohner said. "This is exactly what the CARE bill is trying to prevent."


*Courtesy of ASRT*





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## MSRT student intern shares views on 'RT in DC'

*By Melissa Mace*

This year, RT in DC was a first for me. As the student intern for the MSRT, I had the opportunity to join three of my fellow board members in Washington, D.C. to lobby for the CARE bill. In addition, I had the opportunity to meet with other RT's from across the country.

The five days we spent in Washington D.C. were not only an exciting and busy time, but also a

learning experience. It was interesting to see how the legislative process works. More importantly, I took an active role in helping to push the CARE bill forward.

The members of the MSRT met with Missouri's representatives and senators to show our support for the CARE bill. Staff and legislators alike were receptive and supportive. Altogether, it was a very positive experience.

However, RT in DC wasn't all business meetings all the time. We had plenty of opportunities to have fun around Washington, D.C. Between some sight-seeing, meeting some interesting locals, and just joking around together, we all had a great time creating fun memories of our trip. If the opportunity comes again, I hope I have the chance to be involved in RT in DC once more.

## MSRT board members attend HB 1214 hearings

*By Anne Rutz*

There is good news regarding the hearing for our State House bill HB 1214. Several MSRT Board members attended the hearing and testified.

We brought up the importance of reducing repeats, education, and the seeming lack of common sense in professions that require a license versus Radiography. I think the best quote of the day goes to Tammy Decker from Cox who said, "My hairdresser needs a license to prove she is qualified to operate a scissors and comb, but I don't need anything to operate high voltage equip-

ment that produces ionizing radiation aimed at patients." The hearing went extremely well, AND there was no testimony in opposition to the bill. NONE. That has never happened before.

Congratulations on a very successful day that happened because of the work of all of you. I especially want to thank the students from State Fair Community College who came on their day off to support the bill. We filled the hearing room; it was a great show of support! Don't forget to write your congressman to ask the committee to vote it to the floor for consideration.