Pennsylvania The Pennsylvania Internist e-NEWSLETTER



GOVERNOR'S UPDATE



We have all been through – and continue to go through - a defining period in all of our medical careers. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated both the outstanding and successful parts of our healthcare system, as well as many of the significant deficiencies and inequalities. Both your Pennsylvania Chapter and the National ACP, have done their very best to keep you informed on the latest information regarding COVID. We have also been hard at work advo-

cating locally and nationally for policies to support you during these extremely stressful times. We have pivoted to offering you as many virtual educational sessions as possible and succeeded in holding a highly rated in-person annual meeting last November in Harris-

With my term as Governor for the Southeast region concluding soon, I do want to take a moment to thank each of you for your tremendously helpful suggestions, insights, and volunteer hours on behalf of the Chapter. Obviously, the last couple of years have not been what I envisioned when I accepted this position, but it has also been incredibly rewarding for me. I have never been prouder to be an internist than I have been through this entire pandemic. I have also never been more grateful to our members and healthcare teams for providing care to patients during this seemingly endless crisis. It has been my true honor to have even a small part in supporting each of you in your efforts. Thank you for everything, and I look forward to continuing

burg. We will continue to do everything we can to support you.

relationships with all of you in the future. I leave you in the incredibly talented hands of Dr. Rachel Ramirez, who will take over as the Southeastern Region Governor after the ACP Annual Meeting, taking place in Chicago this April. Please welcome her as warmly as you welcomed me four years ago.

We hope that this newsletter provides you information on some of the latest issues going on in Pennsylvania, as well as actions taken at the national and state level on your behalf and that of patients. We know that many of you have been through trying times, both personally and professionally. Please remember to take care of yourself and give yourself some time to relax, reflect and regenerate. Stay safe, and I look forward to seeing and speaking with as many of you as possible in the days ahead.

Lawrence Ward, MD, MPH, FACP Governor, Southeastern Region

PA-ACP Advocacy Successes: 2020, 2021

t's a fair question to ask, "What have you done for me lately?" Since early 2020, many of the PA-ACP advocacy efforts have been focused on issues relating to COVID-19, the opioid epidemic, and solving issues for physicians and patients. Here's a short list of some advocacy successes PA-ACP had, working for you in the state Capitol.



 Passage of legislation to expand the ability of seniors to access PACE, PACENet

programs, expanding the program to more than 20,000 additional recipients. Wolf also signed bipartisan bill HB 1260, now Act 94, increasing income limits for PA's prescription drug program for seniors by \$6,000, to \$33,500 for single individuals and \$41,500 for married couples. The act also eliminates the requirement for PACENET cardholders not enrolled in Medicare Part D to pay a monthly benchmark



premium. A second bill, HB 291, now Act 92, protects thousands of additional seniors from losing PACE and PACENET eligibility due to Social Security COLA increases through 2023. Prescription benefits for nearly 18,000 seniors would have been reduced or eliminated without legislative action, and the two laws protect access to coverage and expanded eligibility for an additional 20,000 older Pennsylvanians.

• Extension of COVID-19 Waivers. <u>HB 1861</u> became law and is not Act 73 of 2021. PA-ACP supported the legislation in the General Assembly and asked the Governor to sign it. The act extends waivers on hundreds of regulations put in place due to the COVID pan-

demic and another intended to help continue combating the opioid epidemic. The Chapter had, in 2020, pushed for licensing changes, retired physician licensing, expansion of telemedicine and waiving of prior authorization as examples. The list of regulations and policies that are impacted is available online.

- Informed Consent. In June 2017, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled, in a 4-3 decision that physicians must personally obtain a patient's informed consent, increasing liability. The court also ruled that communications between a physician's qualified staff members and patients will no longer be admissible at trial to establish whether the physician obtained informed consent. PA-ACP supported legislation (SB 425) that corrected this ruling by the Court and reinstated the team concept and physician decision-making.
- Blocked several pieces of legislation that would have negatively impacted the use of medically assisted treatments for SUD. SB-675: would have required duplicative licensure requirements (plus addi-

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PA ACP Advocacy

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tional \$500 fee) to prescribe buprenorphine in PA. <u>HB-386</u>: would have required the Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs' to continue to use client placement criteria developed by PA for Medicaid recipients needing drug and/or alcohol treatment, rather than more scientifically-supported criteria, which other states currently use. And <u>HB-1662</u>: would have added Suboxone- and buprenorphine-related deaths & incidents to the Methadone Death & Incident Review Act.PA-ACP provided testimony and worked with the Human Services Committee and legislative leadership to block the first two and amend the third.

- Passed legislation (Act 78 and Act 79) reforming physician assistant licensing. Amendments supported by PA-ACP gave physicians the ability to refuse supervision of more than four Physician Assistants without fear of liability, retribution by hospital, health system, practice group.
- Secured full Medical Assistance funding for Academic Medical Centers for three straight years. PA-ACP was successful in efforts to reinstate this funding,

despite Governor Wolf proposing reductions in state funding of more than 29% each year.

- Extension of the ABC-MAP program and PDMP. <u>HB 1774</u> extends, now Act 72 of 2021 extends the Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions program and PDMP, which had been set to expire in June 2022. The program now runs through the end of 2028.
- Prevented passage of legislation to expand scope of practice beyond training for midlevel providers. $\underline{SB\ 25}$ would have given advanced practice nurses independent practice, and $\underline{SB\ 511}$ would have significantly expanded pharmacists' scope of practice, giving them continuing authority to administer more vaccinations, injections, biologicals, and to adjust medications for patients.
- Creation of a state-level insurance exchange, saving patients money and expanding funds available for MA, CHIP programs from insurers. PA-ACP called for state ACA health insurance markets oversight; and establishing the Pennsylvania Health Insurance Exchange Fund. Passage of the legislation resulted in raising between \$198 and \$248 million per year to operate the new state program and reduce insurance premiums in the individual market by 5% to 10% from the rates using the federal exchange.

John Nikoloff President, ERG Partners

PA-ACP Priority State Advocacy Efforts for 2022

New health care uncertainties, new challenges and needs for physicians and patients alike are surely ahead in 2022. The PA-ACP will continue working to lead medical advocacy on your behalf to improve your daily practice and your patients' health care.

At the same time, this is also a general election year in Pennsylvania, and the last year of Governor Wolf's term in office. Both parties will

be pushing party agendas and seeking legislation to influence public support for their efforts to keep or capture the majorities in the state House and Senate and the Governor's mansion.

Among the priorities PA-ACP has identified for 2022 are the following:

• Telemedicine – extension of the ability to utilize telehealth visits and payment parity vis a vis office visits. PA-ACP has been a strong supporter of <u>SB 705</u>, which passed the Senate and is now in the House Insurance Committee. The Chapter has supported the state mandating coverage of telemedicine since 2016. Legislation has passed the

Senate in each session since then, but has failed to get final passage in the House.

• Prior Authorization Reform - PA-ACP has helped lead a coalition

of more than 50 patient advocacy groups and a half dozen medical and hospital organizations to secure passage of prior authorization reform. The current bill (SB 225) will be amended and considered by the State Senate this spring.

• Responding to legislative initiatives re opioid crisis – example, fentanyl, prescription limitations, substance use disorders. The General Assembly currently has more than 50 active bills that would impact the prescription of controlled substances, use of suboxone, fentanyl, medically assisted treatments and other issues related to opioids. PA-ACP is monitoring these

bills and taking action whenever legislative initiatives could have unintended consequences for physicians, treatment decisions and SUD patients.

- Establishing pilot project for CRNP independent practice in health shortage areas. In opposing CRNP Independent Practice (SB 25), PAACP is supporting creation of a six-year pilot program in federal Health Professional Shortage Areas with a study after five years to evaluate the effort and impact on health care in those areas. Nurse practitioners have maintained that independent practice would result in improved outcomes in areas where health care practitioner shortages create access issues.
- **Insurance Regulation** PA-ACP worked with legislators to secure introduction and consideration of legislation (<u>HB 681, HB 171</u>) making non-compete clauses illegal. Now we're seeking amendments to prevent limitations on time and distance.
- Support for Transparency in Drug Pricing legislation. PA-ACP has long supported this concept, and has testified about support for the issue. <u>SB 579</u> would begin the process of addressing soaring prescription drug prices, creating a Pharmaceutical Transparency Review Board tasked with reviewing drug prices and making recommendations for how to address affordability burdens in PA.
- Defending physicians against court rulings that would overturn current medical malpractice, venue, and joint and several liability laws. PA-ACP has joined in multiple amicus curia briefs on lawsuits where decisions could impact or overturn medical professional liability rules that have been in place for 20 years, including venue, discovery, statutes of limitations and joint and several liability.
- Opposing expansion of vaccination exemptions, medical freedom legislation. Pennsylvania already has one of the nation's least restrictive laws governing vaccine exemptions, allowing philosophical and religious exemptions. Some of these bills would extend beyond the COVID-19 vaccine to children and all vaccines necessary for school entry. Recent legislative efforts have tried to push those limits even further to include the right to refuse any medical procedure, treatment, injection, vaccine, or prophylactic as a Constitutional right. PA-ACP will continue to oppose such legislation.



ADVOCATING FOR YOU AND YOUR PATIENTS - MARK THESE DATES!

The College and PA-ACP are continuously advocating for you on practice, insurance and patient safety issues, providing government relations and lobbying services in the halls of Washington DC and Harrisburg.

In 2021-2022, PA-ACP has established priorities for its state-level ad-vocacy. These include mandated coverage of telemedicine, prior au-thorization reform, establishing pilot project for CRNP independent practice in health shortage areas, transparency in drug pricing, med-ical malpractice/venue issues, and insurance contracting as priorities. We are also engaged on issues of expanding access to quality health care, a host of opioid issues, health workforce and funding problems and with the various state responses and waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ongoing information on <u>PA-ACP Priorities and Advocacy Update Reports</u> are also on the website.

But the advocacy doesn't start and stop with the work being done by the College, Chapter and its lobbyists. There are many opportunities for direct, personal involvement for our members.

LEADERSHIP DAY, WASHINGTON, DC

AACP will hold its annual Leadership Day events in Washington, DC on May 17 and 18, 2022. You may learn more HERE. If you are interested in attending, please email stomlinson@acponline.org.

Pennsylvania has led the nation in having a delegation of 20-25 members participating in the two-day event for the last decade, and we'd love to have you join with us this year.

During Leadership Day, the College spends Tuesday training attendees about key issues and legislation, how to hold effective meetings with elected officials and staff, and has speakers talking about their experiences in legislative activity. Pennsylvania members have the opportunity to meet with the entire state Congressional delegation and their staff, and to network with leaders from other states.

ADVOCACY DAY, HARRISBURG, PA

SAVE THE DATE! A-ACP is planning to hold its annual Advocacy Day at the state Capitol in Harrisburg June 6 and 7. This is your opportunity

to learn about state level issues and legislation, and to meet with the key committee chairs and leaders of the state House and Senate who control the legislative agenda for the Commonwealth.

Whether you are an internal medicine student, resident, fellow, specialist or subspecialist, this is an opportunity to join together to amplify our voices on the important healthcare policy issues actively being discussed by our legislators in Harrisburg.

Save these Dates, and look for more detailed information on these opportunities in the coming weeks.

KEYSTONE CONTACTS NETWORK

PA-ACP has a program and priorities in place and an experienced government relations staff representing you in the state Capitol, but your support as a constituent is critically important to making our message clearly heard.

The Keystone Contacts Network works to develop relationships with Pennsylvania State Representatives and Senators and gives PA-ACP grassroots impact on policies and legislation. By becoming a Keystone Contact, you receive legislative updates on key policy issues to help you engage in outreach to the General Assembly and the Wolf Administration.

Join us and become a Keystone Contact today. Help us make a difference for your practice and your patients!

Join the Keystone Contacts

HONORING

Dr. Elmer Holzinger

When I was a young doctor (a very long time ago), I was attracted to the American College of Physicians as an organization that fosters professionalism and excellence in patient care. The ACP leaders do so through direct teaching and role modeling. In my very long career, I have not seen any-



one fulfilling this role more than Dr. Elmer Holzinger, who continues to teach medical students and residents at the age of 94. He recently stopped direct patient care due to physical restraints. Dr. Holzinger recalls the ACP as his faithful companion in this long journey. He was a governor of the Western PA region from 1992 through 1996 and was elected Master of the ACP in 1997.

Dr. Elmer Holzinger is a Pittsburgh native who received his medical continued on next page

Honoring Dr. Elmer Holzinger

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degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1954. After serving in the US Navy for two years, he returned to Pittsburgh to answer his calling to practice primary care as a general internist and teach medical students and residents. He assumed numerous roles as a teacher at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He also led, chaired, and taught at the department of medicine at St Francis Medical Center, and became full time Faculty at Pitt in 2002. While his clinical and administrative roles have changed over the years, his passion for teaching never did. He received numerous awards from multiple regional and national organizations. When I asked him about his most memorable ones, he answered, "All of them," but admits that his shortlist includes, The Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of Pittsburgh, Master of the ACP, Doctor of Laws Honoris Educator at Philadelphia Osteopathic School of Medicine, Professor Emeritus of Medicine at Pitt, and the Faculty Humanism Award from the Gold Foundation in New Jersey. Dr. Holzinger has an endowment fund in his name at the University of Pittsburgh that grants humanism awards to a graduating medical student, a senior medical resident, and two faculty members every year.

Dr. Holzinger loves bedside and small group teaching, reminding young doctors that in the era of advanced testing and imaging, the key to providing evidence-based and cost-effective care starts with a thorough history and physical exam. He enjoys discussing differential diagnosis and clinical decision-making.

Dr. Holzinger has witnessed significant changes in the practice and delivery of healthcare and is very encouraged by the role played by the ACP to promote equal access to medical care for all. He is concerned about physician burnout and encourages young doctors to join medical organizations to address the root causes and advocate for better access to care and better work conditions. He reminds all doctors to remember why they choose the medical profession in the first place, to serve all sick and needy patients.

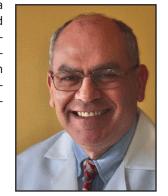
Asking Dr. Holzinger, "How does one go from being a good to a great doctor?" he answers, "Read on every patient, because each patient can teach you something.

At a personal level, Dr. Holzinger always made time to spend with his wife and four children. He especially enjoyed teaching his children to be honest, hard-working, kind, educated, and to be good citizens. As far as his reflections and hopes for the future, he is most worried

about the decline of the number of internists pursuing primary care and would like the ACP to take a leading role in reversing this trend.

Internists take care of each patient as a whole, and this role must be preserved to provide comprehensive and cost-effective care. Patients like to have a personal knowledgeable primary care physician who can guide them through the complexity of care, in addition to the subspecialists involved in their care.

Ibrahim Ghobrial, MBBCh, FACP *Governor, Western Region*



IT'S TIME TO BE HEARD... JOIN THE PA-ACP HEALTH AND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE



No physician in Pennsylvania needs another description of these "unprecedented times," or encouraging messages about the new normal as the pandemic shifts again and again. We get it -- we live this every day, working tirelessly on behalf of our patients, clinic and hospital staff, and learners. What do we seek then? To be heard, to have a voice in shaping the important policies that will affect our practices and patients for years to come. Who better than those of us on the frontlines of clinical care to

help influence policy priorities, educate our policymakers, and help our PA-ACP leadership craft critical messaging to lawmakers and regulators?

The PA-ACP Health and Public Policy Committee needs you — no experience required. This group serves a pivotal role in helping the PA-ACP advance critical efforts on issues such as telemedicine, prior authorization reform, drug pricing, expanding access to quality health care, and many more. We are seeking diverse voices from across the state, from urban and rural areas, working in the hospital or the clinic, all levels of experience. Trainees are also welcome.

The HPPC formally meets virtually four times annually. There is no commitment for additional work, but we welcome as much engagement as you can spare, particularly on issues that may spark your passion. I welcome all opinions and perspectives and ideas. Come share them.

The only way to make change is to start the conversation. What do you have to lose?

Join us! If you are interested in joining the committee or have any questions, please email me at dekoskyas@upmc.edu. I look forward to hearing your voices.

Allison DeKosky, MD University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

New PA-ACP Governor and Governor-Elect

Both the Eastern and Southeastern PA-ACP chapters will welcome new leaders at the beginning of April.



Rachel Ramirez, MD, FACP will take over as Governor after serving for the last year as Governor-Elect. Dr. Ramirez is an associate program director in the Internal Medicine Residency at Abington Jefferson Health in suburban Philadelphia. She has served the PA-ACP as the co-chair of the Council of Young Physicians, as a judge for the regional poster sessions, and as a member of the Doctor's Dilemma committee – serving in 2021 as the host and mod-

erator of the state championship rounds. Rachel's other appointments and activities include service as Medical Director, Hartnett Health Services, Ambulatory Clinic, Abington Jefferson Health (teaching clinic for residency and treats underserved); Physician Representative, Abington Adult Medical Associates for Jefferson Medical Group Leadership Committee; Elected Member-at-Large, Medical Executive Committee 2016-2018; Community Lecturer, Primary Care Topics; Item Writing Task Force for MOC Questions, American Board of Internal Medicine since 2018. Dr. Ramirez brings a passion for educating and developing the next generation of internists, caring and advocating for the underserved patient community, and serving as a voice in support of equitable reimbursement and work-life balance for her fellow physicians. Dr. Ramirez takes the reins from Lawrence D. (Larry) Ward, MD, MPH, FACP who has served the chapter with distinction as Governor of the Southeast Chapter since 2018.

At the same time Linda Thomas-Hemak, MD will become the Eastern Chapter's Governor-Elect. Dr. Thomas-Hemak is the President and Chief Executive Officer of The Wright Center for Community Health and its affiliated entity, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education. Linda joined The Wright Center in 2001 as a double board-certified faculty physician. She remains an inspired practitioner and healer at heart, practicing and teaching primary care in her hometown commu-



nity at The Wright Center's Mid Valley Teaching Health Center in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Amongst the many awards and recognitions bestowed on her throughout her career, Dr. Thomas-Hemak is especially proud of receiving the prestigious Ann Preston Women in Medicine Award by the Pennsylvania Eastern Region Chapter of the American College of Physicians for "outstanding efforts and achievements to promote career success, leadership and overall quality of life for women in medicine and fostering tomorrow's women leaders." She will serve as Governor-Elect through April, 2023 when she will assume the role of Governor from Lawrence H. (Larry) Jones, MD, FACP.

The PA-ACP is governed by a dedicated leadership team. Read more about them HERE.

Women in Medicine® Launches First-of-its-Kind Speakers Bureau to Elevate Female Thought Leaders in Healthcare

CHICAGO (January 31, 2022) – Women in Medicine® (WIM), a nonprofit dedicated to eliminating the gender gap in the US health-care system, announced today the launch of its new Speakers Bureau, a comprehensive resource for conference organizers, media, research labs, and other organizations to find women experts across healthcare.

WIM's Speakers Bureau (https://www.wim-speakers.org/) is the first of its kind in the US,

and takes aim at ever-growing gender inequities in America's medical system. One study found, for instance, that women only accounted for 30 percent of all academic conference speakers — and that nearly 40 percent of panels were "manels" comprised entirely of men.

This disparity reflects – and perpetuates – a number of other gender gaps in medicine, in which women are paid less, promoted less, publish less, and receive less research funding than their male counterparts. This, despite the fact that women make up 70% of the healthcare workforce, outnumber men in medical schools, and have proven,



in numerous arenas, to deliver better health outcomes. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has only exacerbated these disparities.

"The pandemic threatens to set back women in medicine for years to come, as more and more are forced to leave the workforce and disproportionately shoulder the burdens of COVID-19," said Dr. Shikha Jain,

founder of WIM and assistant professor of medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology at the University of Illinois Cancer Center. "One way to combat this widening gender gap is to amplify women's voices in the public sphere and showcase their thought leadership. With our Speakers Bureau, anyone looking for a conference speaker, panel participant, research collaborator, or expert resource now has a one-stop-shop to do just that."

WIM's Speakers Bureau is a database of female medical professionals, which interested parties can easily filter by subject matter expercontinued on next page

Women in Medicine

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tise, availability, languages spoken, and more. Those who wish to register as a speaker can fill out an application and choose a membership plan on the bureau's website.

"By limiting who we give thought leadership opportunities, we limit who medicine can reach, what we can speak on, how we can best care for patients, and, ultimately, our ability to build a stronger and more equitable medical profession," said Dr. Eve Bloomgarden, an endocrinologist and Chief Development Officer of WIM. "Rather than simply relying on existing personal networks, the Speakers Bureau makes it easy for individuals and institutions to be more intentional in who they offer these opportunities to – and empower women's voices."

Aligned with the launch of WIM's Speakers Bureau, Dr. Bloomgarden and Dr. Jain will be hosting a conversation on Twitter Spaces about closing the gender gap in medicine in honor of National Women Physicians Day – this Thursday, February 3rd, at 8pm CST.

"We created this Speakers Bureau so that we would never again hear the tired excuse that, 'There just isn't a qualified woman for this,'" added Jain. "There are in fact many qualified women, and we hope the Speakers Bureau will go a long way toward ensuring that they're no longer overlooked."

About Women in Medicine®

Women in Medicine® ("WIM") is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to closing the inequitable gender gap in healthcare. WIM offers continuing medical education and longitudinal leadership programming, opportunities for thought leadership through innovative initiatives such as a speakers bureau and the WIM Research Lab, formal mentorship and sponsorship, community and network building, and allyship programming for male leaders in healthcare. WIM focuses on educating and empowering women in healthcare and male allies to work towards implementing innovative strategies to eliminate the gender gap utilizing evidence-based research and the amplification of equity initiatives. WIM allows women in medicine to not only learn the various ways they can effectively address the inequitable treatment of women in medicine but also to connect, collaborate and support each other as we work towards fixing the system.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PA-ACP Panel Discussion for Graduating Residents

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 - 12:15 pm

This PA-ACP panel is for residents and early career physicians and will provide advice on job hunting a nd information for physicians new to the job. Our panel is comprised of a diverse group of physicians from across the field of internal medicine who have a range of experience levels.

REGISTER HERE

Getting on your nerves: an overview of Herpes Simplex I/ II and Varicella Zoster

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 - 12:15 pm

Speaker: Dr. Aparna Sarin

Internal medicine Specialist, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

REGISTER HERE

2022 Philadelphia Agreement for Gender Equity (PAGE) in IM training Virtual Conference

Friday, March 18, 2022 - 9:00 am

We are happy to announce that on March 18, 2022 we will be hosting a second consensus conference on Gender Equity in Internal Medicine training sponsored by the Southeastern PA-ACP chapter. This conference serves as a follow up conference to our original meeting on January 8, 2020. We invite past participating programs and new programs interested in joining to attend the two-hour virtual conference. Click for more information.

REGISTER HERE

ACP Annual Meeting please visit:

https://annualmeeting.acponline.org/

SAVE THE DATES:

Doctor's Dilemma

Saturday, October 15 for the ACP-PA Eastern and Western Regions

Saturday, October 22 for the ACP-PA Southeastern Region Watch pa-acp.org for abstract submission information. The abstract portal will open in late June/early July. Review past posters **HERE**

2022 Pennsylvania ACP Chapter Annual Scientific Meeting!

Saturday, November 19, 2022

The 2022 PA-ACP Annual Scientific Meeting will be returning to the Hilton Harrisburg on November 19, 2022. Join us and visit pa-acp.org for information as it becomes available.

2021 Annual Meeting Highlights!

The Pennsylvania Chapter held our annual meeting live in Harrisburg on Saturday November 20, 2021.

https://pa-acp.org/annual-meeting-2021/





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ACP Resources

Read about What ACP Advocacy Did For You and Your Patients in 2021 READ MORE HERE

Many physicians who have worked at non-profit centers may be eligible for loan forgiveness after making 120 payments on their federal loans through the **Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program** (PSLF). **READ MORE HERE** about the program or contact the PA-ACP if you have additional questions.

Keep up with PA-ACP Events - https://pa-acp.org/upcoming-events

Follow Us on <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Twitter</u>

