Happy New Year and what a great start to 2012!

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, our growing coalition began the year with a HUGE advocacy victory by securing unanimous Legislative approval and Governor Chris Christie’s signature for a resolution putting New Jersey formally on record in opposition to the awful recommendation by the United States Preventive Services Task Force against PSA screening for men of all ages. We all worked together and swiftly to make this happen following the public release of the draft recommendation in mid-October.

Legislators were receptive to our request for a formal resolution opposing the USPSTF recommendation, but time was running out on us with the Legislature ending its 214th session in early January. And just like the last minute rescue by the hero in the old Westerns of a woman tied to the railroad tracks, we had precious little time to spare. The resolution was passed in both Houses of the Legislature during the very last hours and the Governor signed the resolution shortly before the “High Noon” deadline for him to take action! I want to thank all of you who played a role in this success, but I want to particularly single out Dr. Michael Cohen, who dropped everything to testify for NJPCAC before the Senate Health Committee.

We can only hope that the remainder of 2012 is as successful, but a little less stressful!

The coming year will not be an easy one for us with many issues facing NJPCAC specifically and others facing physicians in general. Medical malpractice; unfair market encroachment by hospitals and other attacks on the integrated model of urologic care; the looming requirements of the Federal Affordable Care Act; and other issues we have not yet even thought of loom ahead. It will be a challenging year, but I know one thing for certain: We have undeniably proven that we are better equipped to face these challenges as a strong and active coalition than we are as individual physicians. I look forward to working with all of you in the year ahead as we meet these challenges head on.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Taylor
President & Chairman
New Jersey becomes first state to formally oppose USPSTF PSA testing recommendation

Legislation was signed by Governor Chris Christie January 17th putting New Jersey formally on record in opposition to a United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation that healthy men no longer need to receive prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests. New Jersey is believed to be the first state in the Nation to formally take such action. The bill, sponsored by the late Assemblyman Alex DeCroce (see article on page 3), former Assemblywoman Joan Quigley, Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, Senate Health Committee Chairman Joe Vitale and Gloucester County Senator Fred Madden, was passed unanimously in both houses on the final day of the 214th Legislative Session, January 9th.

This is a big win for men and their families in the State and for the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition, which worked with Legislators and the Governor’s office to make this action possible.

The resolution “memorializes the Congress of the United States to seek withdrawal of United States Preventive Services Task Force recommendation against prostate-specific antigen-based screening for prostate cancer for men in all age groups.”

“New Jersey demonstrated remarkable leadership by taking swift and decisive action to oppose this dangerous recommendation,” said Dr. David Taylor, Chairman of the Board of NJPCAC and President of Garden State Urology in Morristown. “Our entire Coalition joins me in congratulating the Governor and those in the Legislature who worked so hard to make this happen. Hopefully, this will send a loud and clear message to Washington that this flawed recommendation should not stand.”

In a press release distributed nationwide following the Governor’s approval, Dr. Taylor took note that the resolution was sponsored by DeCroce, who passed away the same evening as its passage. “Alex left an immense and lasting legacy in so many areas affecting all of us in New Jersey,” he said. “It is truly fitting that one of his last actions could very well save lives. There is no more important element to saving the lives of men who develop prostate cancer than early detection.”

For the full text of the resolution, click here: http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AJR/89_I1.PDF
Read the NJPCAC press release: http://njpcac.org/psa-testing-alert/#more-34

The American Urological Association congratulated New Jersey and NJPCAC on its action and urged other states to take similar action. Read the AUA press release here: http://www.auanet.org/content/press/press_releases/article.cfm?articleNo=266

Congressman Runyan joins in the fight against PSA testing recommendation

In a bipartisan effort, New Jersey Third District Congressman Jon Runyan joined Congressman Joe Baca of California to urge that US Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius reexamine the USPSTF draft recommendation against prostate cancer screening.

The Congressmen were reacting to a recommendation by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to downgrade PSA testing to a ‘D’ level – meaning there is “moderate or high certainty that the service has no net benefit or that the harms outweigh the benefits.” (continued on page 3)
Runyan

(continued from page 2)

“I have very strong concerns about the USPSTF’s suggestion that the PSA test is no longer as beneficial as previously reported,” said Rep. Runyan.

“Thousands upon thousands of men have relied on this test for early detection of prostate cancer. This change could result in a dramatic shift in how our nation tests and treats prostate cancer and I am eagerly waiting for the Secretary’s response.”

The Congressmen are rightfully worried that should the recommendation go forward, patients could lose access to early screening for prostate cancer altogether. This is especially troublesome for men who are at the highest risk. We applaud Representatives Runyan and Baca for their efforts, and urge other Congressmen to join in the cause!

NJPCAC meets with new Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald

NJPCAC members met with Assemblyman Lou Greenwald on January 18th to discuss our efforts to preserve the integrated cancer care model. Delaware Valley Urology (DVU) was gracious enough to lend us their new facility for the meeting with the Legislator. Assemblyman Greenwald was recently sworn in as the new Assembly Majority Leader for the 215th Legislature and has a background in health policy consultation as counsel to Carlisle and Associates in Voorhees, NJ.

The meeting was attended by NJPCAC Chairman Dr. David Taylor, NJPCAC Board Member Dr. Adam Perzin of DVU, DVU urologist Dr. Mark Fallick, and Donald Sico of Donald Sico & Co., LLC. After a brief tour of the new facility, NJPCAC spoke at length with Majority Leader Greenwald about treatment trends in prostate cancer therapy and the value that NJPCAC’s integrated urology groups bring to the delivery of cancer treatment for virtually one out of every two men diagnosed with prostate cancer in the State.

Overall, the meeting was a success. We look forward to working with Majority Leader Greenwald in the future.
NJPCAC Loses a Friend

Alex DeCroce

June 10, 1936 - January 9, 2012

We were stunned and saddened to hear of Assembly Republican Leader Alex DeCroce’s sudden death after the conclusion of the 214th Legislative voting session January 9th. Assemblyman DeCroce was a good and loyal friend to NJPCAC and sponsored the PSA Testing legislation AJR89 which was unanimously passed in both Houses (see article on page 2) and signed by the Governor.

DeCroce, a resident of Parsippany-Troy Hills, served as Assemblyman for Morris and Passaic Counties from 1989 until his death. He was the most senior member of the Assembly, where he had been the Republican Leader since 2003 as well as co-chair of the Bipartisan Leadership Committee. Alex held the title of Deputy Speaker of the Assembly from 1994 to 2001, and chaired the Assembly Transportation Committee in the 90’s. He was a champion for crime victims’ rights, introducing legislation to support victims of violent crimes in the 1990’s and in this last legislative session.

Governor Christie honored Alex DeCroce January 10th in the Assembly chambers with a speech in which he called the Assemblyman a dear friend and mentor. Governor Christie credits DeCroce with helping him get started in Morris County politics in 1993. The State of the State address and reorganization of the 215th Legislature scheduled for that day were postponed in order to honor DeCroce.

Assemblyman DeCroce is survived by his wife Betty Lou, their three grown children, and two grandchildren.

Dr. David Taylor had known DeCroce for more than 15 years, having worked together on Morris County issues, and the Assemblyman was a friend to many of us. He leaves behind a legacy of leadership and service to the state. He will be missed.

Betty Lou DeCroce was elected by District 26 Republican Committee members to replace Alex and will be seated in February.

Flowers on the desk of Leader DeCroce in the Assembly chambers
Assembly and Senate Leadership for the 215th Legislature have named their choices to lead their respective Health Committees. Dr. Herb Conaway (D-Burlington) will continue to chair the Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee. Senator Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex) has been renamed chair of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee. The Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee and the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee are responsible for the oversight of health care policy.

Chairman Conaway has been serving the New Jersey Legislature since 1997. He is the only legislator to hold both law and medical degrees, and practices internal medicine. Dr. Conaway was named Chairperson by Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald and the Assembly Democratic leadership team.

"Quite simply, there is no one better to lead this panel than Dr. Conaway," Greenwald said. "His expertise and understanding of the issues are unmatched. He doesn't just devise health care policy. He lives it each and every day. We're lucky to have him and look forward to his continued leadership."

"This is a crucial time for health care policy in the state of New Jersey," Conaway said. "We must ensure the unfolding federal reforms are maximized to our advantage, all while heath care for women, seniors and the poor are leading concerns. It's going to take a lot of study and work over the next two years to protect them as much as possible, but I'm ready to continue working hard to do what's best for patients and seniors."

Senator Joseph Vitale was sworn in as chair of the Senate Health Committee on January 10th. Senator Vitale has served the NJ Legislature since 1998. He sponsored the KidCare and FamilyCare Health Coverage Programs and was a crucial part of the Emergency Health Powers and Patient Safety Acts.

“Senator Vitale’s foremost priority is protecting the health of children and working families as well as making health insurance accessible for all New Jerseyans,” it says in his vision statement.

To make his vision a reality, Senator Vitale has crafted numerous pieces of legislation to improve the quality and efficiency of health care in New Jersey.

Senator Vitale has taken on many hard issues and has been instrumental in working with physicians, patients and other interest groups to find solutions. He continues to advocate for better health care for everyone in New Jersey.
Advocacy Update
By Donald Sico
Donald Sico & Co. LLC

If the Aristotle prescription is true - that “the antidote for fifty enemies is one friend” - then the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition has in the Legislature the antidote for hundreds of enemies it might face in the weeks and months ahead.

Like any other entity, advocacy is a “relationship endeavor” and NJPCAC, in a very short time, has built strong and enduring relationships with key members of the Legislature. And those friendships have helped us fend off the “enemies at the gate.”

NJPCAC can pat itself on the back for working to help reelect Dr. Herb Conaway who chairs the Assembly Health Committee. Dr. Conaway faced a strong challenge in a district that was drastically changed as a result of legislative redistricting which occurs every 10 years following the new Federal Census. NJPCA PAC contributed to the Assemblyman’s reelection effort both monetarily with a special fundraiser and by getting the word out to NJPCAC members and friends who reside in the 7th District. The result was a strong and convincing victory on Election Day. Dr. Conaway was reappointed Chairman of the Assembly Health Committee by Speaker Sheila Oliver. Dr. Conaway was a stalwart in our efforts to secure passage of a new law regulating ambulatory surgical centers that was both fair to physicians and improved standards at the same time. Unfortunately, the final bill, which we supported, was “pocket vetoed” by the Governor and we will have to wage this battle again in the new Legislature.

Two other NJPCAC friends were elevated in the 215th Legislature. Senate President Steve Sweeney named Senator Joe Vitale the new Chairman of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee. NJPCAC has a great working relationship with Senator Vitale and will be meeting with him in late February to discuss issues of key importance to NJPCAC’s member medial practices and, most importantly, our patients. Assemblyman Lou Greenwald was elected by his colleagues as the new Assembly Majority Leader, the number two position in the Assembly behind the Speaker. Coalition members have already met with Majority Leader Greenwald, who took time out of his busy schedule to tour one of Delaware Valley Urology’s fine facilities and to discuss the value of our NJPCAC members’ integrated model of cancer care for specialized treatment of prostate cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in American men.

NJPCAC did lose a dear and trusted friend when Assembly Republican Leader Alex DeCroce passed away on January 9th during the final hours of the 214th Legislative Session. We will miss him. The Republican Caucus elected Assemblyman Jon Bramnick as its new leader and Republican Leader Bramnick, I am pleased to say, has also been a strong supporter of NJPCAC and its issues. Assemblyman Bramnick already has a track record of speaking up when it matters on our behalf.

These are just a few of the “friendships” we have been able to cultivate in a short period of time. But as the old saying goes, “You can never have too many friends” and NJPCAC will continue to build relationships in the Legislature and Executive Branch.
Take Me To Our Leaders!
Leadership for 215th Legislature Named

Senate Leadership
- Senate President – Steve Sweeney
- Senate Majority Leader – Loretta Weinberg
- Senate President Pro Tempore – Nia Gill
- Senate Deputy Majority Leader – Paul Sarlo
- Senate Minority Leader – Tom Kean, Jr.
- Senate Deputy Republican Leader – Diane Allen
- Senate Republican Conference Leader – Robert Singer

Assembly Leadership
- Assembly Speaker – Sheila Oliver
- Assembly Majority Leader – Louis Greenwald
- Assembly Speaker Pro Tempore – Jerry Green
- Assembly Deputy Speaker – John Wisniewski
- Assembly Majority Conference Leader – Gordon Johnson
- Assembly Minority Leader – Jon Bramnick
- Assembly Minority Conference Leader – Dave Rible

News on Second Great Prostate Cancer Challenge Race Coming!

Check the next newsletter and your email inboxes for news about the 2012 Great Prostate Cancer Challenge Race. Details on location and dates are currently being finalized. The NJPCAC Board has pledged to make the Second Annual Race even bigger and better so dust off those running shoes and start training!
Calling All New Jersey Urologists

We are always looking to expand the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition because we understand there is “strength in numbers.”

We recently completed a mailing to every urologist in the State of New Jersey and asked them to join our growing Coalition. If you know of a colleague who is not a member, please invite him or her to join and to take a look at our webpage (www.njpcac.org) for additional information. There is also a membership application form on the webpage they can use to contact us if they want to join.

New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition

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