Prior to the full-blown outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 160 physicians and physicians-in-training gathered in St. Paul for the MMA’s annual Day at the Capitol on March 4.

There, they met with legislators to discuss MMA’s top legislative priorities: reducing minors’ access to tobacco and e-cigarettes, preventing firearm injury and death, increasing immunization rates and reducing third-party interference in patient care.

Before meeting with legislators, attendees heard comments from Rep. Kelly Morrison, MD, an OB/GYN in Deephaven and MMA member. First elected in 2018, Morrison has been a leader on numerous health care issues, including reproductive rights, prenatal care, drug pricing and prior authorization reform. Morrison also authored the MMA’s provider tax alternative in 2019.

Morrison re-emphasized the MMA’s top legislative priorities in her remarks to the group, as well as the need for physicians to get involved in advocacy. “I think you all agree that it is important to have physician voices represented,” she said, stressing the importance of having “science-based decisions” in policy.

Sen. Matt Klein, MD, another MMA member, stopped by the event to thank his fellow physicians for their engagement.

Following Morrison and Klein’s remarks, physicians and physicians-in-training met with their individual legislators and then finished the day with a reception at the Commodore Bar & Restaurant in St. Paul.
1 More than 160 physicians and physicians-in-training gathered at the Capitol on March 4 to advocate on behalf of their peers.
2 Fourth-year medical student Tom Schmidt introduces his child to the world of politics.
3 Rep. Kelly Morrison, MD, addresses the crowd and thanks them for their advocacy efforts.
5 Sen. Matt Klein, MD, (in suit) poses for a photo in Senate chambers with a group of medical students.
6 Day at the Capitol is a great opportunity for physicians and physicians-in-training to participate in government and fight for their profession.
Nominations for MMA officers still open

The nominating process is still open for MMA president-elect, trustees and AMA delegate/alternate delegates; nominations will close in June. A copy of the job descriptions and preferred skills/attributes can be found at: https://www.mnmed.org/MMA/media/Hidden-Documents/MMA-Leadership-Job-Descriptions-2019.pdf.

Please send any nominations you have for president-elect, trustee or AMA delegate/alternate delegate to Shari Nelson (snelson@mnmed.org) by June 5.

The nominating committee will meet later in June to recommend a slate of candidates for each position. The member-wide election will begin in August and close 30 days later. Election results will be announced as soon as possible. New leadership will assume their roles following the Annual Conference in September.

Nominate a peer for one of MMA’s awards

Members are encouraged to nominate their peers, medical students and advocacy champions for one of MMA’s four annual awards. Visit the MMA website (https://www.mnmed.org/Forms/MMA-Award-Nomination-Form) to make a nomination by June 26.

Award categories include:

- **Distinguished Service Award.** Given to a physician who has made outstanding contributions in service to the MMA and on behalf of medicine and the physicians of Minnesota during his or her career.

- **President’s Award.** Designated for individuals who have made outstanding contributions in service to the goals of the MMA.

- **Medical Student Leadership Award.** Presented to a member of the MMA Medical Student Section who demonstrates outstanding commitment to the medical profession.

- **James H. Sova Memorial Award for Advocacy.** Given to a person who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of public policy, medical sciences, medical education, medical care or the socio-economics of medical practice. Sova was the chief lobbyist for the MMA from 1968 until the time of his death at the AMA meeting in December 1981.

Pandemic forces MMA to pivot on in-person events

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MMA has cancelled its in-person events through at least the end of June. This includes: the Rochester Doctors' Lounge that had been planned for late April, the May 30 volunteer gathering at Feed My Starving Children in Eagan and the June 24 Open Issues Forum.

Staff is also meeting to determine the viability of other in-person events for the second half of the year including the MMA Annual Conference, scheduled for September 25 and 26.

Stay tuned to MMA News Now for details about other events planned for later in the year.
The world turned upside down. These are the words allegedly sung by retreating British forces after their defeat at the Battle of Yorktown, recently popularized in the Broadway musical “Hamilton.” As a big fan of Broadway musicals, I have found these words replaying in my mind over the past several weeks while our world, as we’ve previously known it, also feels turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, amid this churn, it is humbling and inspiring to witness Minnesota physicians and other health care professionals—and countless other “essential” workers in our community—confront the crisis and its uncertainty with professionalism, kindness, collaboration and a grit honed, in part, by Minnesota winters.

How can I help? In the immediate wake of Gov. Tim Walz’s March 13 declaration of a peacetime emergency to address COVID-19, the first and most frequent inquiries of the MMA came from physicians asking how they could help. Amazing. Working in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Health, the MMA immediately connected physicians, many recently retired, with Minnesota Responds, Minnesota’s medical reserve corps. The MMA Foundation also activated its Physician Volunteerism Program (PVP) to help identify physicians to support needs in community clinics and among Native American tribes.

Bringing medicine’s voice forward. Physicians are providing critical leadership in numerous ways during this crisis—in their practices, in their health systems, in research settings, in laboratories and as advisors to Gov. Walz and Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. The MMA is also deeply involved in shaping the state response to COVID-19 and working to ensure that the needs of practicing physicians are reflected.

Protecting and supporting physicians. The personal and financial toll of this virus remains to be tallied, but it is certain to be profound. The MMA will continue to work aggressively to protect and support physicians as you care for critically ill patients, work to sustain your practices and strive to maintain your personal health and well-being. Please see our COVID-19 page (www.mnmed.org/COVID19) for resources and visit the “MMA Action” link from that page to see additional details about our work on your behalf.

Coming soon—The Pulse. In June, the MMA will roll out a new tool, The Pulse, to help improve policy development and add transparency to decision-making. The Pulse will allow members to submit policy issues for consideration, vote on proposed policies, offer comments and feedback and review decisions made by the MMA Board of Trustees. Just as you’ve mastered Zoom, telehealth or other virtual connection technologies, I’m confident you will find The Pulse to be an innovative and easy way for you to shape the direction of your association.

Membership renewal period extended to June 30! The usual grace period for MMA membership renewals ends March 31. Given these extraordinary times, however, the MMA has extended the deadline for 2020 renewals to June 30. Your support is appreciated and is critical to making sure that the voice of physicians is heard.

Did you know? MMA members receive a 10 percent discount on professional liability insurance. COPIC is MMA’s endorsed medical professional liability insurance carrier. COPIC is also a physician-led organization dedicated to patient safety. The MMA encourages members to contact their current MPLI agent or Jerry O’Connell, COPIC’s director, Regional Development, at 844-858-1411, ext. 6182, for more information.

Because I began this column with a “Hamilton” quote, I think it seems fitting to end with one as well, one that again feels relevant to this current, historic moment, “When our children tell our story, they’ll tell the story of tonight.”

Thank you for your work and dedication. Stay safe and be well.

Janet Silversmith
MMA CEO
VIEWPOINT

Navigating turbulent seas

We HEAR . . . even better we LISTEN
We SEE . . . even better we OBSERVE
We FEEL . . . even better we RELATE
We SMELL . . . even better we SAVOR
We SPEAK . . . even better we ENCOURAGE
We THINK . . . even better we BELIEVE

I will level with you. It is difficult to know what to say in a short message. There is so much to say and a great challenge in how to say it. The poem above was written recently by a friend as he contemplated the changes before us. I think it represents a path through and forward in this time.

In a letter I sent to Minnesota physicians on March 25, I noted that we are embarking on a period of great change and upheaval. Change is constant nearly every day. Our work processes have changed dramatically and some of us are experiencing great uncertainty in our ability to keep our practices stable and continue to provide work for those who depend on us. We are also dealing with changes in our home lives as we adjust to having our children home from school. They are struggling to adjust, too. We have new concerns for our extended family wherever they may live.

During these times, it helps to review what we’ve done in the past to overcome these challenges. Tactics like “stay at home” and “social distancing” were employed in the 1918 flu pandemic. Several of my “more experienced” patients tell me about the changes in society and the prevalent fear in the polio years. We know from these examples that cities that adhered more strictly to these public health tactics fared better. As leaders in the community, it is our duty to continue to support these public health measures for as long as it takes. We need to vigorously support and assure the safety of those who are involved with direct patient care, especially of COVID-19 patients.

Imagine for a minute if this pandemic would have taken place 20 to 25 years ago. We now have technologies that allow us to gather virtually to see each other and to care for our patients, and to continue our common work, which provides us a sense of purpose and action that is necessary in helping maintain our resilience.

Unfortunately, this pandemic has also pointed out (sometimes glaring) weaknesses in our overall health system, and associated supply chains. In this time, we also see how social determinants of health even further amplify health disparities. We need to be leaders in making sure these issues are addressed and fixed. That is a duty we all have. I look forward to engaging with you as we do this critical work.

We are in this for the long haul and life will not return to “normal” soon. You likely have heard how some mourn the loss of “the past,” but I encourage each of you to think of ways how this can be a time of a “new and better creation.” For that, we need all of you. This is our common call to action. Together, just as we have done for the last 167 years of the MMA, we will put all our effort into supporting you, amplifying your collective voice and creating something better.

I want to leave you with a link to some music that has been one of my methods of stress reduction in this time. https://youtu.be/v0IIZX0pqVM

As leaders in the community, it is our duty to continue to support these public health measures for as long as it takes.