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LOUISIANA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

It is with utmost honor and respect that I have been able to represent the Louisiana Dental Association (LDA) as your president during a year of great challenges. After a nearly two months shut down and fighting to get businesses back open, Louisianans became the target of several major hurricanes. Reflecting over the many challenges of 2020, I am humbled and inspired by the collective response of our dental community to act swiftly and deliberately in adapting to the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing hurricanes. I am moved by the enduring strength our organization has demonstrated as we meet profound challenges impacting our everyday lives as dentists, colleagues and leaders. **My LDA/ADA membership has never meant more to me! Join me in renewing your 2021 Tripartite dues.**

Nationally, we all know the ADA has always been an incredible source of information and resources, but the pandemic has shown us just how powerful this great organization can be for us.

The ADA:

- Quickly understood that dental professionals needed guidance about appropriate patient care during a time of quarantine. The ADA supplied a list to guide dentists about which specific procedures treat patients' urgent issues, help prevent pain and minimize future impending problems. Most state health departments accepted and adopted the ADA guidelines.
- Provided resources on precautions for dentists and their teams while practicing dentistry during a pandemic. This included the Interim Guidance for Minimizing Risk of COVID-19. Set up various tool kits that are frequently updated and assist dentists with protocols with staff and communicating with your patients about how you are putting their health and safety first in a world full of "new normals."
- Very quickly interpreted and provided an educational resource for each part of the CARES Act and how it would impact dentists, dental team members and their families.
- Continually interpreted and provided information about the Small Business Administration's PPP and EDIL programs. Successfully advocated for greater flexibility for the PPP program which received applications from over 80% of practicing dentists.
- Interpreted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, H.R. 6201 and then advocated for the small business exemption on our behalf. Without this exemption, the financial health of many dental practices would have been severely at risk.
- Utilized the Legislative Action Center to send out alerts and inform us on critical issues, putting us in contact with our Washington legislators.
- Assembled Dental Practice Recovery Advisory Task Force to provide tools and guidance to safely and effectively reopen our practices.
- Provided an educational resource for understanding the confusing issue of the differences in mask types.
- Worked with national, state and local FEMA agencies to secure masks and other PPE for dentists who were opening back up to provide patient care. The PPE was provided at no charge (other than a shipping fee) to the dentists.
- Provided educational resources through numerous free webinars helping us to understand the rapidly changing climate related to health implications of the virus, the CARES Act and the many SBA programs.
- Advocated for dentists for the Department of Health and Human Services Provider Relief Funds.
- Created a Patient Return Resource Center for members to access patient information pieces such as social media posts. This Patient Return Resource Center contains member resources to support you and your dental team in communicating with your patients about how you are putting their health and safety first in a world full of "new normals."

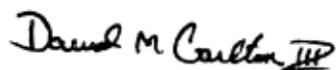
The resilience and enthusiasm of the dental profession is amazing, and it has been incredible what has been accomplished to benefit our practices during the last several months. Not only has the LDA and ADA assisted dentists at every turn during an unprecedented pandemic, our associations have carried on the day-to-day operations allowing organized dentistry to continue to work on our behalf. **In addition to tirelessly working to help get dentists back to work, here are a few other items that the LDA accomplished during the first half of the year.**

- Daily Covid-19 Updates were provided while offices were closed to keep everyone updated on ADA releases, LA Dept. of Health (LDH) Directives, SBA programs, PPE info and other pertinent details.
- Engaging and planning for proper PPE supply acquisition and protocols for patient treatment as dentists return to practice and quickly re-establish patient care.
- LDA leadership worked diligently with LDH and MCNA to get the much-needed funds owed to Medicaid providers from an increase in the program that the LDA had successfully achieved during the 2019 legislative session. Although providers had filed the claims since July 1, 2019, it was a welcome surprise to receive those additional funds in a lump sum in their bank accounts at a time when dentist offices were closed.
- Extended the 2020 membership dues payment grace period from March 31 to July 31.
- Contracted legal advice and created a FAQ link on the LDA website with Louisiana law information to help members answer HR questions related to unemployment and payroll issues that arose during the pandemic.
- Engaged in conversations with the Governor's office and the dental board and ultimately enacting legislation to ensure that graduating dental students have a pathway into the field to begin serving their communities' dental care needs.
- Engaged in continued conversations with the Governor's office and LDH regarding the importance of dentists as essential providers and part of the overall health care of patients.
- Completed a comprehensive strategic planning meeting in June which set the short- and long-term goals of our association for next four years.
- Filed and successfully passed several bills in the 2020 legislative session (a 28-day, fast paced session occurring while staff were continuing to assist members in COVID-19 related issues). One of the new laws, which the ADA believes is the first of its kind, prohibits "systematic downcoding with the intent to deny reimbursement otherwise due to dentists" and requires third-party payers to disclose downcoding policies that are routinely applied. Act 187 — as the new law is officially referred — specifically prohibits third-party payers from downcoding a fixed bridge to a removable bridge. Another of the bills regarding pre-existing conditions eliminates the "missing tooth clause" which will be a great benefit to both our patients AND our practices.

While this is a laundry list, it cannot completely recap all the work and accomplishments the two organizations provided on our behalf. The COVID-19 pandemic and necessary social distancing have revealed our deep and profound need to belong to a community. The LDA is the community of your profession. It is your association and membership at work. We are here for you, serving in ways we never imagined. Please continue to be courageous and resilient and stay connected to your colleagues, offer support and encouragement in these uncertain times, and relish in the fact that no problem is permanent. Thank you to everyone who has advocated for and supported this great organization and our profession. Stay safe and be well.

Again, please join me in supporting the amazing associations who have supported us!

Sincerely,



Dr. David M. "Trey" Carlton III
President, Louisiana Dental Association