



Letter from the President

Duty calls: Cast your vote for AAP president-elect, district leaders



Dr. Block

September is an important month for the Academy and for you as a member. That's because it's time to vote for our next president-elect and district leaders.

The AAP continues the tradition of determining leadership by a vote of all eligible members, giving each of us an opportunity to evaluate nominees and cast individual ballots. This membership privilege carries a responsibility to participate. In past years, however, only a small minority of members met that responsibility. I challenge you to help us reverse that trend. As you prepare to cast your vote for president-elect, please consider the following suggestions:

Learn about the candidates. The AAP National Election Center at www.aap.org/moc provides biographies, CVs and comments from our two candidates who have been carefully selected by the National Nominating Committee. The candidates are Michael Klein, M.D., FAAP, and James Perrin, M.D., FAAP. As I write this column, both have posted remarks in response to three important issues:

1. views on enhancing the value of membership at the national and chapter levels;
2. personal stories illustrating influences on the candidate as an AAP member and as a mentor; and
3. opinions on issues considered to be the candidate's highest priority for the AAP and what policies the candidate would focus on to advance the chosen priorities. (See related article on page 7.)

Talk with your colleagues who might know the candidates. Ask about the candidates' work with the AAP; their dedication to the organization and our members; and their record of advocacy for children, families and the pediatricians who care for them. Both Dr. Klein and Dr. Perrin have presented their thoughts and ideas at each of the five district meetings. While election rules preclude your state chapter leaders from encouraging you to vote for a particular candidate, they can share what they observed.

Doing these two things can help you make an informed choice about the future leadership of our organization. And one thing's for

certain: The individual elected will not only be responsible for leading the Academy but also for connecting and collaborating with other like-minded advocacy efforts.

This issue of *AAP News* features an article on one such effort: the advocacy work of Katie Beckett and her mother, Julie (see page 31). Katie passed away on May 18, but her legacy, the Katie Beckett Waiver, lives on to facilitate appropriate home care and opportunities for children and adults with disabilities. This Medicaid waiver was conceived by Julie Beckett, co-founder of Family Voices, her congressman and federal Medicaid officials. Thanks to their work, thousands of children who might have lived in hospitals or state institutions now live at home. Katie was born in my Iowa hometown, and pediatricians I know and personally respect were involved in her care.

Connecting with courageous individuals like Katie and her mom is an important aspect of the AAP. As pediatricians, we are prepared to deal with difficult individual child and family issues related to health and development. Addressing a single patient's issue can foster family engagement and lead to improved pediatrician/family partnerships aimed at resolving both individual and community issues through the patient- and family-centered medical home.

Although an individual president serving on the executive committee and Board of Directors for only three years cannot address all advocacy efforts personally, he or she must be responsive to information and guidance from AAP leaders and staff. It is an honor to represent the AAP, working with and being inspired by advocates like Katie, who through bravery, passion and persistence have literally transformed the lives of thousands. I hope I have represented us well, as Katie would expect no less. Future AAP presidents are expected to continue this tradition, and your vote to determine who that will be is very important.

So, please vote during this month's election period. Remember: It's not just a privilege. It's a responsibility.

I look forward to introducing you to our next president-elect during the 2012 National Conference & Exhibition in October in New Orleans.

*Robert W. Block, M.D., FAAP, President
American Academy of Pediatrics*