



The Man in the Arena

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Richard J.D. Pan, MD, MPH

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, also that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

- President Theodore Roosevelt

AS I WRITE THIS, we are mourning the death of Steve Thompson, Vice-President of Government Affairs for CMA for the past 12 years. He left us a little less than two weeks before the closing of the legislative session and its flurry of final votes.

STEVE WAS OUR MAN IN THE ARENA. HE KNEW THE GREAT ENTHUSIASMS AND GREAT DEVOTIONS, AND HE DARED GREATLY. HE MAY HAVE COME UP SHORT ON OCCASIONS, BUT NOT FOR LACK OF TRYING. AND HE FOUGHT FOR US ALMOST UNTIL HIS LAST DAYS.

As Vice-Chair of the CMA Council on Legislation, I attended the CMA legislative staff meetings for the past half-year. I watched as Steve Thompson led an incredible team to work for us. Our legislative staffers are smart and dedicated and often win victories for us in the face of considerable opposition. While some may view them as just "hired guns" for CMA, I know our staff truly believes that government should allow physicians to take care of their patients. I am humbled by their passion on behalf of our profession.

Yet, despite the tremendous work done by our legislative staff, our medical society and the CMA is only as strong as its members. We members also need to enter the political arena and spend ourselves for a worthy cause, the health of our patients and our community. This November and beyond, we must vote and encourage our colleagues, staff, and patients to do the same. Political leaders need to know we care about what they are doing and that we will vote our conscience on election day.

We also need to support CALPAC and be willing to contribute to local campaigns. It costs money to get a message to the voters, and we need to help those we support get their message out to others. I am proud CALPAC recognized SSVMS as the large county medical society with the greatest number of 300 Club contributors. Unfortunately, as I browsed the Secretary of State webpage on campaign contributions, I noticed how badly we are outspent by trial lawyers and by groups seeking to expand their scope of practice. Our CMA staff frequently beat the odds, but we need more of our colleagues to help level the playing field by contributing.

In addition to voting for our future political leaders, we will also be voting on several propositions this November that can have a profound impact on health care. The CMA supports four propositions, each of which represents the hopes of our profession despite some shortcomings.

Proposition 67 (emergency medical services), cosponsored by CMA, emergency physicians, and others, provides funds to emergency rooms and their on-call physicians by an increase in the 911 telephone surcharge. As our region's emergency rooms turn away ambulances for days at a time, we need to fund the last safety net in our health care system. I ask that medical staffs contribute 10 percent of the value of the uncompensated care your staff annually provides to emergency room patients to this initiative, and I thank those physicians and medical staffs who already did their part.

Proposition 63 (mental health services expansion), initiated by Sacramento Assembly member Darrell Steinberg, seeks to shore up the mental health system with a one percent tax on personal income over \$1 million. Some may debate the funding source, but the need is undeniable.

Proposition 71 (stem cell research) is a \$3 billion bond issue to fund stem cell research in California. We are at the brink of providing new hope to patients with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injuries, and other conditions.

Proposition 72 (health care coverage requirements) attempts to repeal a CMA co-sponsored law requiring employers with over 50 employees to provide health insurance coverage to their employees and those with over 200 employees to cover their employees' dependents as well. Over 80 percent of the uninsured are employed or dependents of employees, and the cost of health care for the uninsured is subsidized by businesses that provide health insurance and taxpayers. As CMA advocates for increasing health care coverage in a system that provides choice to patients and physicians, CMA urges you to vote "Yes" on Prop 72.

Each day, physicians struggle to care for our patients in the clinic, the hospital, the emergency room, and the operating room, and — despite those who would seek to find only fault with our work — spend ourselves on behalf of our patients. There are also critics of our medical society or CMA, who do not enter the arena themselves. Applaud those who enter the political arena on our behalf and dare greatly, even when we come up short. Join us in the hope of triumph in the end.

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