

Dear Fellow ISMA Member,

I write to ask your support of my candidacy to serve as an ISMA delegate to the AMA House of Delegates. It really makes a difference who serves in these roles, and it is important that you know each candidate so that you can make an informed choice. Let me briefly lay out four of my top priorities.

One of the key responsibilities of a member of the AMA House of Delegates is to communicate AMA policy, information, activities, and programs to constituents and to communicate constituents' concerns and priorities to the House of Delegates, AMA executive leadership, and staff. This means sharing national perspectives with constituents on hospital medical staffs; county, district, and state medical societies; and specialty societies, and ensuring that these more local voices are well represented at the national level. Serving as a delegate, I would work hard to ensure that we make full use of the ISMA Report and other member channels to promote regular two-way communication. Also, I would travel the state to make sure that this communication takes place face to face, including not only District and Pints and Politics meetings, but also hospital medical staff and state specialty society meetings. As ISMA president-elect, I have already worn out a good bit of shoe leather and tire tread making such connections. We can do a better job of promoting communication between ISMA members and the AMA, and I would dedicate myself to making this happen.

Another key responsibility is advocacy. We need our most effective advocates representing us at the AMA, and we need to ensure that our members and colleagues are as engaged as possible as citizens of our profession. If medicine and the care of our patients are to thrive, we need to enhance our performance in advocacy, doing a better job of sharing with others the obstacles and opportunities that we physicians encounter on a daily basis. This means not only marshaling data but also telling stories that engage and inspire others in promoting what our colleagues, patients, and communities most need and care about. This is part of what it means to be a good citizen of medicine, and service as an AMA delegate would provide ample opportunities to carry this mission forward.

A third key responsibility is to cultivate and promote promising leaders at all levels of organized medicine and help them secure positions of servant leadership. I have had the privilege of teaching every graduate of the nation's largest MD-granting medical school for the past 30 years, and during that time we have dramatically increased medical student leadership development, including a new leadership course in the curriculum, a second course that sends students to the statehouse for a month during legislative session, and a new physician MBA program that already boasts over 500 graduates. This is a passion of mine, and service as an AMA delegate would increase my capacity to promote this vital mission of leadership development.

Finally, the AMA explicitly states that at least one member of a state's AMA delegation should be an officer of the organization, a qualification I would energetically meet as president-elect of ISMA.

I have spoken to three sections at AMA House of Delegates and Interim meetings, and for over 20 years I have represented the IU School of Medicine as a member of the AMA Academic Physicians Section, so I am familiar with the workings of the House of Delegates and the opportunities for meaningful service it provides.

The AMA likes to refer to what happens in state and county medical societies and hospital medical staffs as grassroots, but this is not quite right. What happens at these levels, and even more so at the level of each medical practice and each encounter between a patient and a physician, represents the full flowering of what is most essential and best in medicine. Although local physicians do not appear on the AMA's organization chart, and the AMA can sometimes talk as though our main role is to pay membership dues and promote AMA policies, sustaining medical practices and caring for patients is the most real and significant thing that happens in medicine, and we need to remind the AMA that everything it does needs to stay focused right here.

I hope you will join me in promoting these vital missions of our AMA delegation.

Yours respectfully,

Richard Gunderman, MD