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**NSA**  
 Neurosurgical Society  
 of Alabama  
 News & Notes

Advancing interest in neurological surgery and allied subjects

WWW.NSANEUROSURGEONS.COM

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

### Public Health

**Emergency Timeframe & Authority (SB97)** limits the timeframe for which a state of emergency can be declared (by the State Health Officer or Governor) to only 14 days. The bill also gives the Legislature the sole authority to extend such declarations. SB97 was discussed in the Senate but ultimately did not receive a vote.

**Abolishing MLC & Restructuring BME (SB239)** is brought by Sen. Jim McClendon and would abolish the Medical Licensure Commission, have the Board of Medical Examiners take on the duties of the Commission, and forbid leaders of any physician specialty organization from serving on the new board. By consolidating the two separate agencies into a single regulatory body, this legislation overhauls the current congressional representation requirements, revokes the appointment powers of the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House, and decreases the board composition by more than half.

**Abolishing State Health Officer & Restructuring State Board of Health (SB240)** is brought by Sen. Jim McClendon and would abolish the State Board of Health, the State Committee of Public Health, the County Boards of Health, and the position of the State Health Officer (among other things). With the two boards and physician oversight no longer existing, the bill creates a new State Health Advisory Board made up of a list of individuals who have some type of relationship

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## Medical Cannabis Legislation survey

UAB asks for your participation in a research survey of opinions regarding medical cannabis legislation and education needs among Alabama physicians. This online survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. Responses are strictly voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifying information will be collected for research purposes.

As a token of appreciation for your participation, the researchers will make donations to participants' preferred charities (\$5 per completed survey, up to \$2,000).

If you have questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Magdalena Szaflarski at (205) 934-0825 or [szaf1am@uab.edu](mailto:szaf1am@uab.edu). Access the survey at: [https://uab.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_07Zo3WbrmfJPpbl](https://uab.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_07Zo3WbrmfJPpbl)

**Neurosurgical Society  
of Alabama**  
**2021 Annual Conference**  
 September 24-26  
 The Grand Hotel  
 Golf Resort & Spa

The NSA discounted rates at The Grand Hotel begin at \$279 per night. Call The Grand Hotel at (800) 544-9933 and ask for the Neurosurgical Society of Alabama room block.

Details coming soon to  
[www.nsaneurosurgeons.com](http://www.nsaneurosurgeons.com).

## Markert named president-elect of national neurosurgery group

[www.uab.edu/news](http://www.uab.edu/news)



Congratulations to NSA member, **James Markert, MD, MPH**, on his election as president-elect of the American Academy of Neurological Surgery for 2020-2021. Dr. Markert is the James Garber Galbraith Endowed Chair of Neurosurgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

As a member of the executive committee, Markert will lead alongside AAANS President Douglas Kondziolka, MD, neurosurgeon at NYU Langone. Dr. Markert will serve current members through leadership and oversight of the Academy meetings, as well as field the educational and funding opportunities that the Academy makes available to its members.

## Neurosurgical Society of Alabama

### PRESIDENT

Robert Robinson, MD  
Birmingham

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### ABOUT NSA

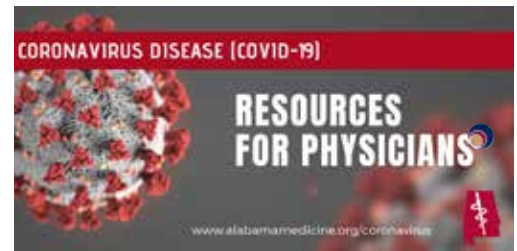
The Neurosurgical Society of Alabama is a non profit corporation that was formed on June 17, 1974. Its purpose is to advance the interest in neurological surgery and allied subjects and to act as a representative for its member at the discretion of the membership by:

- Fostering a feeling of fraternal spirit among those members of the medical profession and closely integrated scientific professions whose interests are chiefly concerned with neurological surgery;
- Stimulating interest within the state or surrounding area and within the medical professions at-large in neurological surgery;
- Advancing knowledge in the above respective fields through the medium of either clinical or preclinical endeavors;
- Facilitating the dissemination of knowledge among members of the Society concerning recent advances in any of the allied fields by appropriate means; and
- Receiving contributions for the purpose of setting up one or more tax free foundations.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Information

The Medical Association of the State of Alabama provides updated information on the COVID-19 vaccine and its availability in its online *Vaccine Toolkit* that includes:

- Comparisons the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson Vaccines
- Vaccine Availability for Physicians
- Pfizer Vaccine Allocation
- Moderna Vaccine Allocation
- Storage of the Moderna Vaccine
- How to enroll as a Vaccine Provider
- Billing/Coding the Vaccine
- COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions
- COVID-19 Talking Points



Access the toolkit and other COVID resources for physicians at [www.alabamamedicine.org/coronavirus](http://www.alabamamedicine.org/coronavirus).

## Legislative Update, continued

to healthcare. County Boards of Health are instantly gone, too, turning such over to the determination of the County Commission. Strangely enough, the State Health Officer position would not exist, but two roles take its place, with the highest, Secretary of the Alabama Department of Public Health, to be appointed by the governor with no requirement that he/she be a physician. It passed the Senate Healthcare Committee and awaits consideration from the full Senate.

**Medical Marijuana** (SB46) by Sen. Tim Melson, MD (R-Florence) would authorize medical marijuana in the state. The House Judiciary Committee, the first of two House committees expected to vet the bill, have conducted a public hearing. Rep. Mike Ball (R-Madison), a Judiciary Committee member and retired law enforcement officer, is shepherding the bill in the House.

### Lawsuits & Liability

**COVID-19 Liability Protection** (SB30) provides liability protection to physicians, health facilities, and businesses from claims arising from COVID-19 and the state's response to the pandemic. The Medical Association, with the help of Starnes, Davis, Florie, LLP, worked with Sen. Arthur Orr in drafting this bill. SB30 has been signed by the Governor.

**Medicaid False Claims Act** (SB241) is brought by Sen. Jim McClendon and prohibits certain fraudulent activities affecting the Alabama Medicaid program. Furthermore, liability for violations of these prohibitions include a civil penalty of \$5,500-\$11,000 per claim, and treble damages. These prohibitions and penalties are different and much more drastic than what current Medicaid and Medicare law provides, creating very serious liability and monetary concerns for physicians. The Senate Judiciary Committee discussed the bill but, due to opposition from Sen. Larry Stutts, MD, Sen. Roger Smitherman, and others, it did not receive a vote.

### Finance & Taxation

**Cares Act Tax Exclusion** (SB98 & HB170) exclude any money received from the CARES Act or other similar COVID-related relief measures from Alabama income tax. "We are not going to tax any of the stimulus monies that came in for businesses, for individuals, for anyone," said Sen. Dan Roberts (R-Mountain Brook). This legislation was signed by the Governor.

### Federal Legislation

**Medicaid Expansion** (The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021), signed by President Biden, includes a number of key provisions that strengthen both public and private health insurance coverage. Among its Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provisions, the American Rescue Plan encourages states to finally take up the Medicaid expansion by offering even more favorable financial incentives than those already in place and allows states to provide longer postpartum health coverage for new mothers.

# Thank you for your membership!

## 2021 Members

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*\*New Member*

## Why Renew your membership with NSA

### Your membership is important!

Membership means joining your colleagues in the only specialty society in Alabama that works to protect the neurosurgical profession and patient's access to quality care.

### Lobbying.

NSA members have a strong voice in the Alabama State House and the U.S. Congress with a top-notch lobbying team focusing on legislation to strengthen the practice of neurosurgery.

NSA members receive updates on legislation, what it means to you as a professional, and how to contact committee members to voice your opinion.

### Your voice counts!

### Newsletters and Alerts.

NSA members receive a quarterly e-newsletter and e-mail blasts of the top news and events affecting Alabama's neurosurgeons. 2020 was a particularly challenging year as we provided members with regular COVID updates, including information on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

### Education.

Even amid the pandemic, NSA conducted our 2020 Conference as scheduled, and simply moved to a virtual platform.

We hope to have our 2021 Conference in person and have pushed the date back to Sept. 23-26. Make plans to join us at the Grand Hotel Golf Resort and Spa in Point Clear. Members of NSA receive a discount on the conference registration fee.



The continued success of our conferences depends on our ability to offer a variety of quality speakers and subject matter relating to the practice of neurosurgery. NSA members may be considered for our speaker pool by sharing an abstract with the NSA Scientific Chairman. For more information on this opportunity, e-mail Meghan Martin at [mmartin@alamedical.org](mailto:mmartin@alamedical.org).

Once finalized, conference details will be posted online at [www.nsaneurosurgeons.com](http://www.nsaneurosurgeons.com).

### Renew Today!

Continue the investment you've made in your career and renew today. Print a dues form or find a link to renew online at [www.nsaneurosurgeons.com](http://www.nsaneurosurgeons.com). We are only as strong as our membership, and we want you to renew with us!

### Questions?

If you have questions, contact Meghan Martin at (334) 954-2500 or by e-mail at [mmartin@alamedical.org](mailto:mmartin@alamedical.org).

## AANS joins effort urging CMS to improve quality payment program

[www.aans.org](http://www.aans.org)


The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) has signed on to a letter to CMS Acting Administrator Elizabeth Richter opposing the retirement of traditional Merit-based Incentive Payment Program (MIPS) and making MIPS Value Pathway (MVP) participation mandatory. MVPs should incentivize participation by reducing the need to report for the sake of reporting in MIPS, allowing physicians to focus their quality improvement efforts in Medicare around a singular clinically relevant episode of care and patient outcome, and implementing simplified scoring policies, including multi-category credit.

The letter recommends CMS look at MVPs as a cohesive quality program and implement MVPs that are thoughtfully designed by physician specialty societies to improve patient outcomes, including MVPs that are multi-specialty and sub-specialty focused.

The letter asks CMS to provide this data to specialties and work with them to reach answers to the following questions:

- Are the measures used within the quality and cost category meaningful to patients and informative to clinicians?
- Is there sufficient variation across those reporting the quality measures to make meaningful comparisons?
- How should the cost data be presented such as identifying outliers rather than the current 10-decile approach?
- What percentage of the specialty currently reports the quality measures and has the cost measure(s) attributed to them?

The signatory societies have long sought a requirement for fewer quality measures to be reported and ask for CMS to design MVP scoring to address these concerns. The continue to urge CMS to establish a bonus payment to hold physicians harmless from steep penalties as they transition to MVPs.

Read the full letter at [www.aans.org](http://www.aans.org). 

# AANS 2021 ORLANDO

AUGUST 21-25



## American Association of Neurological Surgeons Annual Scientific Meeting

**August 21-25, 2021, Orlando**

The AANS heard your overwhelming interest in gathering together - in person - as a specialty. The best way to meet this need is to move the meeting to Orlando, Aug. 21-25, 2021. The change in location and date of the meeting was not undertaken lightly and will help assure our ability to safely hold an in-person meeting that will provide scientific, educational and social interaction.

Location and dates are not the only change you'll experience during this meeting. The AANS has been working the past year to create a transformative meeting experience with a focus on new, interactive opportunities. This will be a family-friendly meeting and we'll have discounts for many of the attractions that make Orlando a top family vacation destination.

Visit <https://www.aans.org/meetings> for details. 

## NSA News & Notes

### Neurosurgical Society of Alabama

19 South Jackson Street | Montgomery, AL 36104  
(334) 954-2500 | Fax (334) 269-5200 | [www.nsaneurosurgeons.com](http://www.nsaneurosurgeons.com)

Robert Robinson, MD, Publisher  
Meghan Martin, Executive Editor  
Charlotte H. Morris, Senior Editor

*The neurosurgical society of Alabama is organized is to advance the interest in neurological surgery and allied subjects and to act as a representative for its members at the discretion of the membership.*

*The articles contained in NSA News & Notes are meant to provoke thought and comment and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the members, Executive Council or staff of the Neurosurgical Society of Alabama. Comments and letters to the editor are welcome Send to [cmorris@alamedical.org](mailto:cmorris@alamedical.org).*