

Jill L. Jaimes, MD  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
Section on Emergency Medicine Advocacy Scholarship  
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For me, the 2006 AAP Legislative Conference was a phenomenal introduction to child advocacy. As a pediatrician, I have always been interested in advocating for children, but really did not know how to begin. This conference was able to provide me the insight and skills I need to commit to speaking up for kids.

The lectures and workshops of the conference lead ultimately to a meeting with our United States Congressmen. The thought of having to lobby was initially daunting and a bit intimidating. As we learned about the issues on Capitol Hill and how to effectively craft a message, the task seemed much more realizable.

Having worked in Houston in the aftermath of Katrina, the issues of disaster preparedness were of interest to me. It was eye-opening to realize how much work we have left to do to prepare for the next unknown. Recent disasters demonstrate that we very much need a universal electronic medical record that we can use across the country. Although such global changes are needed, simply backing up data as well as knowing all of your logins and passwords are steps we can all take to become more prepared.

Universal healthcare coverage remains a hotly debated topic among politicians. Unfortunately, solutions for insuring all Americans, are often at the expense of children. Such is the case for current legislation on Capitol Hill. We learned how current bills regarding Association Health Plans for small businesses would negatively impact preventative services for our country's children.

The conference was a wonderful networking opportunity to meet others interested in child advocacy. The Texas delegation represented a diverse group of pediatricians. Despite our varied interests, we were all able to speak towards a common goal as we lobbied our Congressmen.

This brief but intense conference has given me the skills I need to continue to advocate on behalf of children. I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop as well as the many wonderful people I met. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.