PLAN FOR IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY ISSUES BOD 11-07-08-37 [Retitled: Plan for Identifying, Prioritizing, and Managing Federal Legislative and Regulatory Issues; Strategic Plan for Federal Government Affairs; Amended BOD 03-06-11-21; BOD 06-00-05-11; BOD 11-98-14-48]

BACKGROUND
From the time a focus group inventoried 66 separate federal issues being tracked in 1998, the APTA Board of Directors has recognized the need to prioritize the wide range of issues that impact physical therapy in order to focus the Association’s advocacy efforts effectively. In 1999, the Board created a Federal Government Affairs Committee and adopted a plan to foster grassroots member input into the federal government affairs process. That plan created the Federal Affairs Liaison position to provide a link between the Committee and APTA Components, bringing Section and Chapter priorities to the Committee as well as conveying alerts and information from the Committee and APTA to the grassroots. A process was defined to annually survey the Components to identify and prioritize the critical federal issues for the following year, with the Federal Affairs Liaison being responsible for submitting the Component’s response.

In March 2007 the Government Affairs Committee reviewed this process and recommended to the Board of Directors that the identification and prioritization of federal legislative and regulatory issues be conducted on a two-year cycle beginning in 2008 consistent with the two-year term of Congress. In the “off-year” in which the identification of critical issues is not conducted, Federal Affairs Liaisons will focus on building and educating APTA’s grassroots network. The Committee believed these changes would keep the process fresher and connected to the congressional election campaign cycle while also creating time for Liaisons to work on grassroots infrastructure.

PURPOSE
This plan outlines the process by which the Association will annually identify and prioritize federal legislative, regulatory, and policy issues on a two-year cycle. Through the Federal Affairs Liaison, this structure creates the opportunity for Components to raise emerging issues and to provide guidance on the Association’s priorities. This process also enables the APTA to enhance the effectiveness of grassroots advocacy by actively engaging individual members in ranking the significance of issues and providing all APTA members with a better understanding of the Association’s agenda and activities on critical federal issues.

PROCESS
New federal issues can emerge and change priorities unexpectedly during any given year, but the following process provides a structure for the APTA Board of Directors to identify, reassess, and prioritize critical federal issues on a two-year basis consistent with the term of Congress.

Even-numbered years (beginning in 2008)

February
At the annual Combined Sections Meeting (CSM), Component leaders are provided an update on current critical federal issues and reminded of the importance of appointing and maintaining a Federal Affairs Liaison whose two-year term coincides with the congressional cycle. Available members of the Government Affairs Committee hold a “public hearing” to provide Component Liaisons and leaders with an opportunity to present issues they believe should be included in the Association’s critical federal issues. APTA Government Affairs staff will also present updates on critical federal issues at CSM forums.

April/May
At the annual Federal Government Affairs Forum in Washington, DC, the survey of critical federal issues is distributed to all Component Federal Affairs Liaisons. The Liaisons are asked to coordinate with appropriate Component leaders, boards, committees, and members to: (1) identify and prioritize issues based on a broad consensus of Component members; and (2) encourage individual Component members to complete the on-line critical issues survey on the APTA website. Liaisons are asked to provide a short explanation of how the consensus response of Component members was compiled. Liaisons must submit the completed Component response to APTA Government Affairs no later than August 31 in even-numbered years. Members of the Government Affairs Committee will also meet with Federal Affairs Liaisons in conjunction with the Forum to
discuss and strengthen grassroots involvement in the identification and prioritization of federal issues.

June
At the APTA annual conference, Component leaders are updated on the status of current critical issues and progress toward identifying and prioritizing issues for the following two-year cycle. Members participating in the conference can complete the on-line critical issues survey at the PT-PAC booth in the exhibit hall.

September
The Government Affairs Committee meets and reviews all issues and rankings identified by Component Federal Affairs Liaisons and individual members. Based on background material provided by APTA staff and relevant Association standards, positions, and guidelines, the Committee identifies and prioritizes the issues it believes will be critical federal issues for the coming two-year cycle. These priorities and any other recommendations related to critical federal issues are forwarded to the Board of Directors.

November
At its November meeting, the APTA Board of Directors reviews and acts on the critical federal issues and priorities recommended by the Government Affairs Committee. These priorities shall serve as the primary focus of APTA’s federal advocacy efforts for the coming two-year congressional cycle and will be reflected in the budgets adopted by the Board of Directors.

The Government Affairs Committee, Component leaders, Federal Affairs Liaisons, Key Contacts, and members of the PTeam grassroots network are notified of the actions of the Board of Directors related to critical federal issues for the coming two-year congressional cycle. A summary of the new critical federal issues and priorities are posted on the APTA website (member-only access). Website information on the status of critical issues is updated frequently.

Odd-numbered years (beginning in 2009)

February
In addition to updates on activities related to critical federal issues, presentations at CMS will focus on issues and activities focused on building and improving APTA’s grassroots advocacy networks. Available members of the Government Affairs Committee hold a “public hearing” to provide Component Liaisons and leaders with an opportunity to present issues they believe should be included in the Association’s critical federal issues.

April/May
At the annual Federal Government Affairs Forum in Washington, DC, in addition to updates on critical federal issues, programming will be provided to assist Component Federal Affairs Liaisons in building and improving the Association’s grassroots advocacy network, including communication and responsiveness. Members of the Government Affairs Committee will also meet with Federal Affairs Liaisons to discuss and strengthen grassroots involvement in advocacy of federal issues.

June
At the APTA annual conference, Component leaders are updated on the status of current critical issues and the process for identifying and prioritizing issues for the following two-year cycle.

September
The Government Affairs Committee meets and assesses both the process for identifying and prioritizing critical issues and activities related to improving grassroots advocacy. Initial plans for the upcoming survey cycle will be considered, and any recommendations for changing the process for identifying and prioritizing critical federal issues will be forwarded to the November Board of Directors meeting.

November
The Board of Directors acts on any recommendations from the Government Affairs Committee regarding changes in the critical issues identification and prioritization process, to be implemented prior to the initiation of the next survey cycle.

CONCLUSION
This process accomplishes several key directives of the APTA Board of Directors related to federal government affairs activities, including the continuing development of grassroots participation in the identification and prioritization of critical federal issues. It increases member awareness of critical issues and improves responsiveness when grassroots communication with policy makers is needed. This process also provides a highly visible structure for members to monitor progress and to participate in advocacy efforts in support of federal issues that move the profession toward achieving Vision 2020.
Explanation of Reference Numbers:
BOD P00-00-00-00 stands for Board of Directors/month/year/page/vote in the Board of Directors Minutes; the "P" indicates that it is a position (see below). For example, BOD P11-97-06-18 means that this position can be found in the November 1997 Board of Directors minutes on Page 6 and that it was Vote 18.