

# DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER



## Letter from the President

Greetings fellow Alaskan PAs,

As 2022 comes to an end I find myself searching for ways to be thankful. But where to start, individually, family, business, community, nationally, globally? We as PAs, US citizens, Alaskans have so much to be thankful for. The view from any window, clean air, refreshing water, nature, quiet. The ability to work in an array of fields with flexibility and respect. Over the past year your board members have continued the conversation with stakeholders and law makers to improve the professional atmosphere for Alaskan PAs. I am truly thankful for their effort and time.

The time has come to carefully chose representatives and senators within our local government to sponsor Modernization

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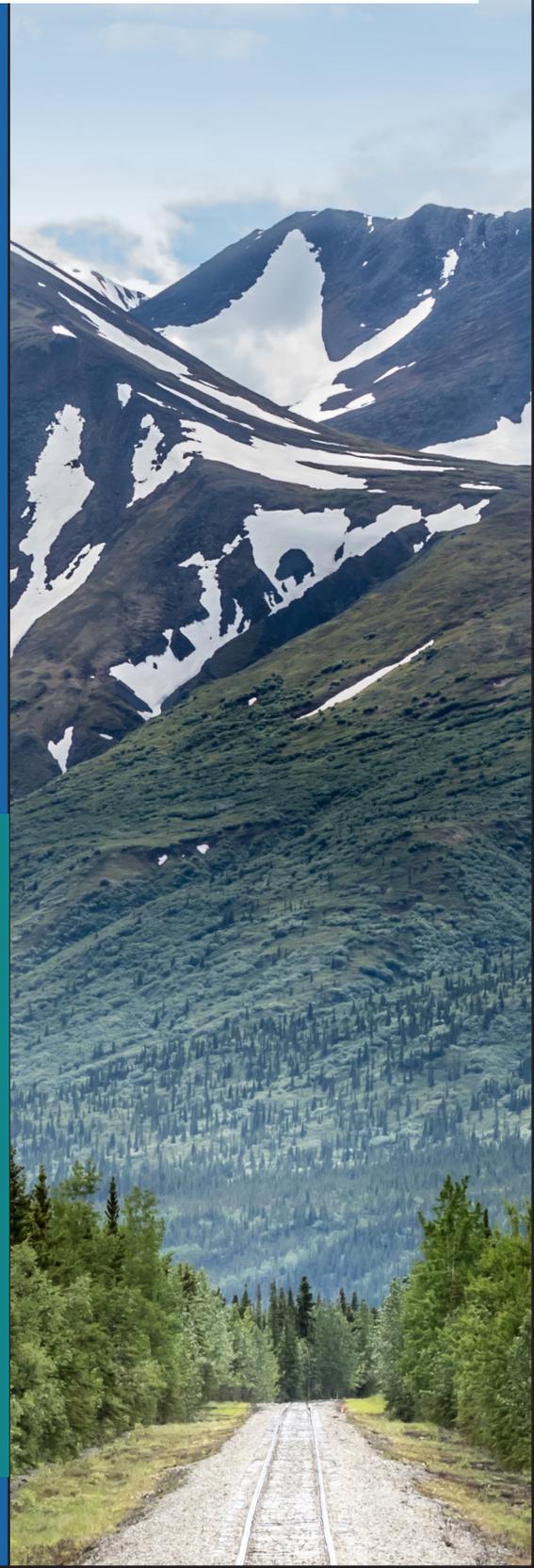
## Legislative Update

Your AKAPA Board continues to advocate for PA regulation and statute modernization.

At the recent Alaska State Medical Board meeting on 11/4 proposed changes were introduced to PA regulations. There was much debate among the board members and no vote was taken. The AKAPA is working with board members to offer another proposed change to the medical board with the hopes of a vote passing to start the process to amend regulations.

If this happens there will be public comment needed! This will be the time to have your voice heard! Please consider getting involved now and help shape PA regulations in Alaska!

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Statute changes through the legislature are also being considered. Now that elections are over we can inspect the makeup of the state government and plan our course of action with the AAPA grant funded lobbyist and the support of the AAPA!

Please join us for more information on the 3rd Thursday of every month!

Tell all your colleagues that now is the time to join the AKAPA and get involved!

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## Wellness, Another Perspective

Submitted by Betsy Douds, PA-C

Wellness, suicide prevention, mental health awareness – healthcare professionals are talking about these things. We have had trainings, presentations, read articles and studies about these topics as they relate to us as providers. Maybe you are not interested in ever hearing someone suggest you take a mindful deep breath when you feel overwhelmed again. You may be frustrated by any unsolicited well intended self-care advice. This response is indicative of burnout, but you already know that. For my part I believe we need to work to incorporate wellness into all healthcare training programs for our up and coming practitioners. However, I was hard pressed to imagine what another article reporting statistics and prevention could add to the conversation.

So, I asked my husband what he thinks of when I say professional wellness? His quick response was “The only time anyone really cares about wellness is when something goes terribly wrong.” He is an international cargo pilot. Pilots, like physician assistants, are responsible for other people’s lives, are often overworked and struggle to find time for exercise and a healthy diet.

A cargo pilot’s duty day can last as long as 18 hours and possibly even longer if their contract states differently. There are rest facilities on the plane but the adequacy of those vary significantly based upon the plane. They may be given a used cotton pillow in the middle of Covid with a three by three used blanket for their sleep shifts. There are no protocols regulating these things.

Organizationally one sees wellness workshops and publications sent to the entire company but these are not specific or applicable to the pilot group. They may say you need rest or say you need exercise. But the provisions for any one of those things are established through contracts negotiated between the pilot’s union and the company. The quality of the food the crew has on board depends on how much the company wants to spend on food domestically or internationally. The amount of sleep they get while out on a pattern is regulated by the FAA. But the implementation of those regulations varies liberally relative to what has been negotiated between the union and the

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of PA Practice in Alaska. The election results are close to certification, but the Alaska State Legislator page has not been updated. Who represents you? Click here to educate yourself on who represents you: <https://akleg.gov/index.php> Please be on the lookout for a town hall meeting with our lobbyist before the new year.

As we have said before, if we can't have your time, we'd love your financial support. Thank you for your continued attention and membership. Please encourage your colleagues to be members of the association <https://akapa.org/Join-us>

Resisting hibernation is a difficult thing for this Alaskan woman. My internal voice whispers, just a short rest before the whirl of Spring is upon us. Rest assure, entering into 2023 with robust vigor and enthusiasm is my goal to continue fueling the AKAPA board mission of modernizing PA practice in Alaska.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Smith, PA-C

## Important Dates

### Membership Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 5, 2023

[Click](#) to learn more

### AKAPA Board Meeting

Saturday, January 14

[Click](#) to learn more

### State Medical Board PA Regulations

Thursday, February 2, 2023

[Click](#) to learn more

### State Medical Board Meeting

Friday, February 10, 2023

[Click](#) to learn more

“I heard a bird sing in the dark of December.  
A magical thing.  
And sweet to remember.  
We are nearer to Spring than we were in September.  
I heard a bird sing in the dark of December.”

-Oliver Herford



company. Adequate work out facilities on layovers have not legislated by the FAA but negotiated by the company. Whether the hotel is located in an area that is safe enough to walk out of and get some exercise is not legislated by the FAA, but guided by financially based decisions on the company's part.

One of the issues where the most progress has been made in the last ten years has been in the area of on duty fatigue. Huge headway has been made and there have been a several studies done on circadian rhythms. What is fatigue, what is acceptable fatigue, and how do we mitigate fatigue have all been defined by the FAA. Every major airline has a fatigue risk management program. Within those programs all flight schedules are constructed to comply with mandated rest requirements by FAR121 commercial operations and FAR117 passenger operations. The most progress in regard to rest has been made by the well-funded pilots' unions of the legacy carriers who carry passengers as legislated under FAR117. Fatigue statistics are measured by physical symptoms, fatigue symptoms, rest/sleep information, job performance, time zones crossed, geographical considerations, nutrition etc. The information gathered from these areas is collected and graphed for assessment of the pilot in the event of an incident. So, on one hand the company will say they are interested in wellness. But on the other hand, many companies have historically fought by lobbying "tooth and nail" in court to limit protections or prevent cargo pilots from inclusion in FAR117. They do this to preserve their bottom line which, of course, is profit.

While it is very trendy for corporations to throw around terms like "wellness", in practice they will always balance the cost over profit. Regardless of terminology, it must be recognized that pilots have come a long way in improving their working conditions. Any progress pilots have made and will continue to make can only be attributed to the persistence, advocacy and data collection on the part of pilots in an effort to keep these discussions ongoing.

We physician assistants are also hoping to improve our contracts and negotiate professional demands that encourage a healthy lifestyle. Most of us are aware that studies have shown that prioritizing wellness in one's practice improves patient outcomes. You may still find yourself irritated by the person who advises you to actively participate in creating a workflow that lends itself to your own well-being. However, I would challenge you to consider your pilot's health the next time you board an aircraft and recognize that you might prefer they are not experiencing severe fatigue or other any behavioral health issues that may result in a poor outcome for the passengers on that particular flight.

# Alaska Academy of PA

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