

We are now about one month into the Presidential Challenge and at the time that I write this letter we have only raised approximately 12% of our goal. It is hard to believe that we have only received that small support from the members of the MATA. This is probably one of the most important avenues that the association has ever taken. We have seen constant changes in the regulation of athletic trainers, from the education and certification to the practice of athletic training, and our very careers. I often hear complaints about the respect that athletic trainers are given by other health care professions or the recognition, or lack there of, by the general public. There are complaints of long hours and low pay and members want something done about that. Well, this is our opportunity. As other health care professions expand and sometimes limit our practices we do not have to just sit by and let this happen. We need to be aware of potential threats to our careers, whether that be intentional or unintentional, due to changes in others practice acts. To do this we need a lobbyist. Members attending the state meeting heard how important a lobbyist could be for our association. This is not a position that will only affect a few of our members. Over the next few months and years it will affect each and every member, no matter what setting you work in. There are athletic trainers who have lost their jobs due to the changes in CMS. Iowa and South Dakota are facing a challenge with Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, which is proposing to modify its "incident to" policy to mirror Medicare's "incident to" rule. This may not have an immediate and direct effect on you or your practice but it sets precedent for other insurers to follow. If members in the "traditional" setting do not think this will affect them, then where will those who are or who have been displaced gain jobs? If we saturate the traditional setting how will that help with salaries and job security? Members working in the setting of education of athletic training students should be concerned with where students will be able to practice upon certification. Even if you do not feel this directly affects you, it does other members of your profession, which should be of concern to you. If you do not support them now, why should they help you if you were in need?

I have heard that our dues for the state are already too high. Others have asked why we cannot use the money in savings to pay for the lobbyist. All aspects of the association take funding to run and operate. We need to have some money in savings for legal assistance when needed or to fund the state meeting, web site and all aspects of the association. If we used those funds we could still only fund the lobbyist for a year and we would be without any savings for emergencies. The MATA has applied for, and received, grants from the NATA. But there are limited monies available.

The MATA is doing everything it can to represent each and every member of the association. The best way to do that is to have a lobbyist who can watch for legislation that may affect athletic trainers no matter what setting they are working in. Do we currently know of any legislation coming forward? Not at this time, but we have had meetings and received some phone calls that would indicate that the door has been left open and that there will most likely be some legislative action this coming session that will directly affect the practice of athletic training. From whom, and to what extent, is unknown but we should expect activity and be prepared. We need every member to take ownership in this fund raising project. If every member would donate, we would easily

surpass the amount of our goal. We can only be a strong association if our members are active and a part of it.

The lobbyist is going to hold a web cast at which time he will take questions from the association on his role and he will be able to explain what he will do for the members. At that time, other Executive Committee and Legislative Committee members will be present to answer questions. This is the perfect opportunity for those who have questions to do so online. The web cast will be held on Nov. 9th at 7:00pm. To access the web cast, go to the MATA web site at www.mnata.com and click on the web cast link. The web cast will remain on the web site for a few months so that you can watch it at a later date as well.

I encourage you all to see the value of the lobbyist, and that you donate to the Presidential Challenge. The Presidential Challenge will wrap up by January 1, 2006. It would be great if we met our goal but it can only happen if the membership is willing to help. Remember that if you do not give, do not ask what the association has done for you – you should ask what have you done for the association. The association is working hard for every member, but it cannot do it alone.