

## INVESTING IN THE TREASURE OF

# Advocacy

### The history and growth of AT advocacy through the NATA Political Action Committee

By Lydia Hicks

**T**he NATA Political Action Committee (NATAPAC), which yielded a 100% win rate in the 2022 election cycle in both the Senate and House, started with a former NATA president's advocacy goal.

When former NATA President and first NATAPAC Chair Chuck Kimmel, AT Ret., began advocating for the rights of athletic trainers at the inception of his term, his first goal was the formation of a political action committee (PAC).

"When I came in as president-elect in 2004, my first action was that I wanted to establish a presence in Washington, D.C., to advocate for us on the federal level, and former NATA President Julie Max [MEd, ATC] was kind enough to allow me to move forward with that," he said.

Established in 2005, NATAPAC has been the voice of the athletic training profession, seeking to build relationships and elect members of Congress that support the AT profession.

"I think [the formation of NATAPAC] sent a strong signal to the federal government and all the other allied health care providers that we were now a player on the national level," Kimmel said. "That we would advocate and protect our profession and our ability to practice the profession with the skills and abilities that we were trained with."

A PAC is a group of like-minded individuals connected by a common goal, who combine resources to back candidates who support their legislative interests and issues. Considered power in numbers, it enables employees or members of groups – such as corporations and professional organizations – to pool their resources and make political contributions to candidates who support issues related to the group. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) sets rules governing PACs in the United States.

As a federal group, NATAPAC provides campaign contributions to approved candidates on behalf of NATA. Nonpartisan, NATAPAC contributes to the campaigns of candidates of the U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives whose views support the advancement of the athletic training profession.

Hence, NATAPAC's mission statement:

*"[NATAPAC] is the sole federal PAC founded for and dedicated to being the voice and advocate of the athletic training profession. NATAPAC empowers members to support elected officials or candidates who champion policy advancing the athletic training profession. Through NATAPAC, members are able to help shape the political environment and educate federal legislators on the significant contributions that athletic trainers make as health care providers across our nation."*

Separately incorporated, NATAPAC operates under its own bylaws and articles of incorporation and is governed by the NATAPAC Board of Directors. The board, comprised of a representative from each NATA district, reviews and approves campaign contributions and supports fundraising.

### Growth in Numbers

From its first fundraiser at Capitol Hill Day in Baltimore, Maryland, to the annual NATAPAC Breakfast at the NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo, NATAPAC has devoted its advocacy

resources to activities supporting political candidates aiding the advancement of the profession.

"We hired our first lobbyist in May 2004, had our first Lobby Day in June 2004 – which I'm proud that it was able to be pulled off so quickly – with buses taken from Baltimore to D.C. to meet with legislators and senate staff members," Kimmel said.

The following year, NATAPAC held a fundraising event at Jillian's in Indianapolis, Indiana, and a tile fundraising event, in which ATs participated in a tile painting and exhibition.

"We started a tile program, where athletic trainers could buy tiles and paint on them," Kimmel said. "They would then be displayed at the NATA office. It was very successful; sold a lot of tiles and raised a lot of money."

Kimmel also pioneered the first NATAPAC Breakfast in 2006, which took place in Atlanta, Georgia. The annual NATAPAC Breakfast is the PAC's biggest event, which takes place during the NATA convention.

"We probably had 60 people there and it has done nothing but grow since then," he said. "Now, it is held in sold-out rooms and they have outstanding presenters."

Current NATAPAC Board of Directors Chair Mark Letendre, ATC, said that NATAPAC's growth is also attributed to networking efforts.

"Before we can go out and fundraise, we need to 'friendraise' amongst our colleagues and you 'friendraise' by making sure they're informed about how important that PAC is to our existence," Letendre said.

### Growth as a Member Benefit

Participating in NATAPAC not only helps move the needle for ATs collectively, but as members support lobbyists, it also provides an added value to their NATA membership, Letendre said.

He said NATAPAC involvement is the best thing NATA members can do with their membership, adding that the PAC's mission also aligns with Goal Four of the new NATA Strategic Plan, "Champion Critical Efforts That Influence Practice Advancement." (Learn more about the NATA Strategic Plan and read it in its entirety at [www.nata.org/strategic-plan](http://www.nata.org/strategic-plan).)



The annual NATAPAC Breakfast is the PAC's largest event, takes place during the NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo. New York Giants senior vice president of medical services/head athletic trainer and former NATA Research & Education Foundation At-Large Director Ronnie Barnes, ATC, was the keynote speaker at the 2019 NATAPAC Breakfast during the 70th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo.

"NATAPAC affords you the ability to practice as an athletic trainer," Letendre said.

Kimmel said that there is more strength in numbers when ATs advocate for the profession via NATAPAC, in lieu of individually supporting political candidates.

"We can make larger donations that have a greater impact if our members are feeding a collective purpose that then can be funneled into the directions that will give us the best opportunity to be successful," he said.

For members interested in participating in NATAPAC, they can expect that NATA will use the funds prudently according to the PAC's mission statement, Kimmel said.

"I think that the members should be able to be confident that there is an arm of leaders out there fighting to get them that recognition, because when they do, I think everyone will benefit regardless of their work setting, regardless of who they treat, regardless of any circumstances," he said. "Beyond that fact, they now would have the ability to earn additional money because of the reimbursement that they would be able to achieve."

### NATAPAC Now

In recent years, NATAPAC has continued to grow in its fundraising efforts.

In 2022, NATAPAC received 2,201 contributions, raising \$56,167 from more than 1,100 NATA members. (Learn more in the December 2022 *NATA News*, available at [www.nata.org/news-publications/publications/nata-news](http://www.nata.org/news-publications/publications/nata-news).)

Since 2021, NATAPAC has also held an annual sweepstakes. To learn more and participate in the next NATAPAC sweepstakes, visit [www.natapac.org/sweepstakes](http://www.natapac.org/sweepstakes).

During the 74th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo in Indianapolis, the NATAPAC Breakfast returns after its hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's keynote speaker will be Murphy Grant, LAT, ATC, NASM-PES. Tickets can be purchased with convention registration at [convention.nata.org/register](http://convention.nata.org/register) and must be purchased in advance. Register now as seating is limited.

### Protecting the Profession's Future

To move the profession forward, Letendre emphasized the importance of continuing to push for federal action advancing athletic trainers.

"Without federal laws protecting us, we would not be in the position we are now and, more importantly, now that we're accepted as the preeminent allied health profession amongst others, we're at the table," he said. "We need to continue to protect our existence at the table, and the only way we can do that is to make sure that [we have a voice in Washington, D.C.]."

He also said it is easy to participate in NATAPAC.

"We can do that with very nominal things," he said. "I profess that if people were to think about giving a recurring donation of just \$6.25 a month, that's all I'm asking of everybody in the membership. All 30,000-plus members, if they were to give a recurring \$6.25, which comes out to about one Starbucks a month sacrifice, it would put us in the position to be able to do things that other allied health professional PACs are doing in Washington, D.C."

Members can contribute to NATAPAC by visiting [www.natapac.org/how-to-contribute](http://www.natapac.org/how-to-contribute).

**natapac**  
National Athletic Trainers' Association, Inc. political action committee

## Frequently Asked Questions about NATAPAC

### Who can contribute to NATAPAC?

Members of NATA can contribute to NATAPAC. Federal law requires that contributors be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents and may not be federal government contractors. Foreign nationals are prohibited from contributing funds for U.S. elections.

### How are candidates chosen to receive NATAPAC contributions?

Members of Congress, or candidates for Congress, are thoroughly vetted by industry-best processes. The contributions process is established in the NATAPAC bylaws. First, a contributions subcommittee is formed annually. This is made up of two at-large members of the NATAPAC board of directors, the NATAPAC board chair, the NATAPAC board of directors liaison and the NATAPAC treasurer. Suggested contributions are compiled separately by each member of our lobbying team, then debated among the team to compile a list of suggestions. The suggestions are presented to the NATAPAC contributions subcommittee for consideration. Considerations are given for committee assignments, leadership, district representation, previous support and AT advocacy. The subcommittee then votes on the contributions. If approved, the lobbying team personally delivers the checks to the supported candidates. NATAPAC funds are not designated for anyone based on political stances, but solely for what is best for the athletic training profession.

### How are the campaign contributions reported?

All campaign contributions are reported to the FEC and are public information. They are also listed on the NATAPAC website, [www.natapac.org](http://www.natapac.org).

### How can I contribute to NATAPAC?

To contribute to NATAPAC, visit [www.natapac.org/how-to-contribute](http://www.natapac.org/how-to-contribute).



Click the "Contribute Now" button after you scan the QR code.

\*Must be an NATA member and logged in to [nata.org](http://nata.org) to contribute