

Nurse Advocacy in Action: Journey to a Smoke-Free OR

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Grand Canyon Chapter of AORN, 0310

Description of the Team

Immediate team included those listed below in addition to support from Grand Canyon Chapter membership and AzNA Affiliation

- Key leaders from the Grand Canyon Chapter (GCC) of Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN): Patricia Coates, Tom Kraus, Pat Mews, Dan Wade, Renae Wright



- Amish Shah, MD, LD5, Arizona Representative and Legislative Sponsor
- Support from AORN Government Affairs
- Kathy Busby, JD, Arizona Nurses Association (AzNA) Nursing Lobbyist
- Industry Representative
- RN advocates who attended Advocacy Day at the Capitol and met with their legislators or wrote letters to their legislators



Assessment

What was the political climate in AZ that set the stage for successful surgical smoke legislation?

Arizona is considered a battleground or swing state. In the general election of 2020, Arizona was comprised of:

Republican 1,508,778 (35.24%)	Libertarian 38,385 (0.90%)
Democratic 1,378,324 (32.20%)	Other 1,355,665 (31.67%)

(Hobbs, 2020)

Republicans maintained their majority in the House of Representatives in the 2020 General Election of 31 seats to Democrats' 29 (Ballotpedia, n.d.a). This was unchanged from the 2018 elections.

Republicans also maintained their majority in the Senate by controlling 16 seats to Democrats' 14 seats. Republicans lost one seat in the 2018 election (Ballotpedia, n.d.b).

The House of Representatives and the Senate were controlled by Republicans, whose party supported regulatory restraint (Ballotpedia, n.d.c). It was the well-developed relationships between Rep. Shah and Kathy Busby in collaboration with the AORN Grand Canyon Chapter and an organizational affiliation with AzNA that helped pass the bill. The pandemic may have had some influence on the passage of surgical smoke legislation in Arizona due to the much-advertised demands of front-line workers in multiple media sources.



Nurse advocates at AzNA Healthcare Day at the Capitol

Preparation and Planning

What did the pre-work for proposing this legislation look like?

- September 2015** –
 - AORN Government Affairs asked Patricia to attend the American Nurse Advocacy Institute (ANAI).
 - Patricia became a member of the American Nurses Association (ANA) and AzNA.
- October 2015** –
 - Patricia attended the three-day ANAI intensive course to learn about the legislative process, how to communicate with legislators, and develop political competency. On the third day, ANAI participants met with their legislators at the Capitol.
 - The ANAI cohort continued to develop their advocacy skills in a yearlong educational program that met every other month.
- December/January 2015** –
 - Patricia worked with AzNA to promote Arizona's Advanced Practice Nursing bill and wrote letters of testimony for the Arizona Association of Nurse Anesthetists to read during the House and Health Services Committee.
- Early 2016** –
 - Patricia participated in AORN's monthly National Legislative Forum (NLF) calls to learn about other states' legislative agendas.
 - Early discussions with AORN Government Affairs focused on proposing RN circulator legislation and the political climate in Arizona.
 - Patricia and other nurse advocates from GCC of AORN attended the annual AzNA RN Lobby Day, which helped the team begin to form key relationships with various state legislators. This became an annual activity for the chapter.
- Fall 2017** –
 - Patricia began to give legislative updates at GCC of AORN meetings.
 - Dan attended a GCC of AORN meeting and became interested in politics and advocacy.
- Early 2018** –
 - As part of Healthcare Day at the Capitol, Dan met with Rep. Shah, the state representative for his legislative district. This was the chapter's first contact with Rep. Shah, and he described to Dan an encounter with surgical smoke that occurred during his medical training.
- Spring 2018** –
 - AORN Government Affairs sponsored Dan in attending the Nurses in Washington Internship (NIWI) to further develop his advocacy skills.
 - Dan additionally joined ANA and AzNA and started participating in the monthly AORN NLF calls.
- 2019** –
 - AORN's policy agenda shifted to focus on surgical smoke evacuation.
 - Patricia and Dan continued to discuss nurse advocacy and policy agendas at chapter meetings.
 - Chapter members contacted their district legislators to support bills related to healthcare as part of the AzNA policy agenda.
- 2019-2021** –
 - The GCC of AORN submitted annual requests to the Governor of Arizona to declare a proclamation for Perioperative Nurses Week in November.
- 2020** –
 - The GCC of AORN became an Organizational Affiliate of AzNA to strengthen relations with AzNA and gained future lobbyist support of a smoke evacuation bill.
- 2021** –
 - Patricia and Dan reported to the NLF that the political climate in Arizona was favorable to introduce a smoke evacuation bill.
 - Through ongoing contact with Rep. Shah at AzNA Healthcare Day, he shared support of health care issues and listened to the nursing perspective.
 - The President of AzNA was also running for a house seat in Patricia's district.
- Fall 2021** –
 - At the GCC of AORN annual Fall Conference advocacy education was provided by AzNA's past president Dr. Selina Bliss, PhD, RN and AzNA's past Executive Director Robin Schaeffer, MSN, RN. They asked about any activity on the smoke evacuation bill.
 - Due to the pandemic, legislation in Arizona was stalled.
 - The team identified Rep Shah as a potential sponsor for the smoke evacuation bill.



Implementation

What did we do?

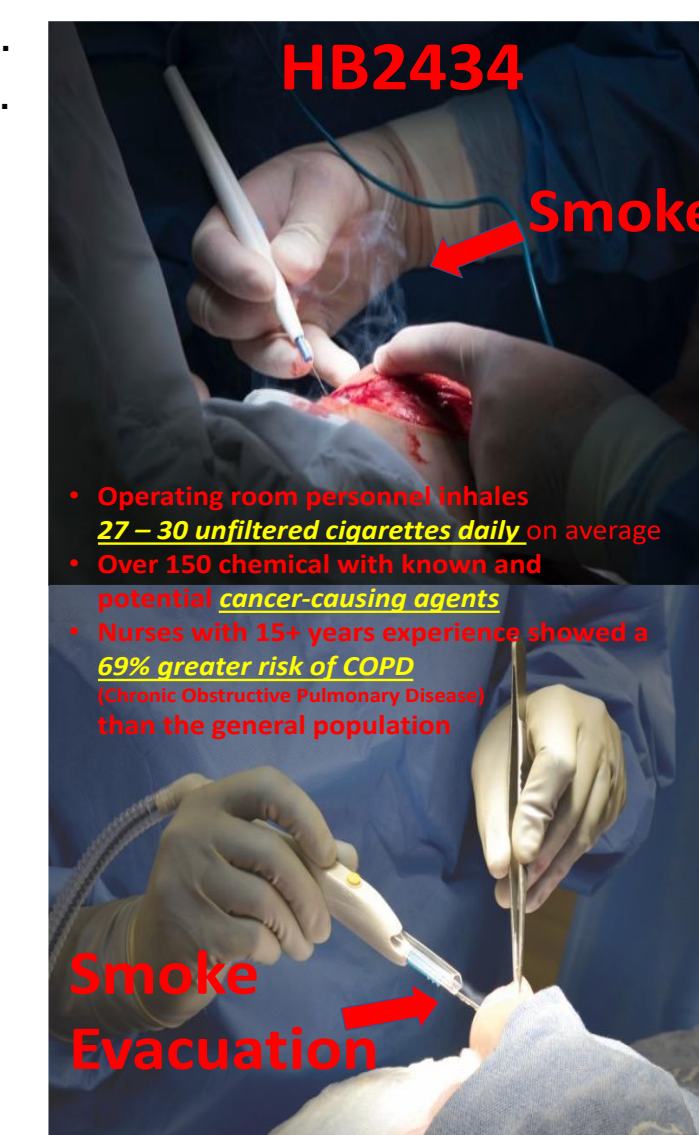
- December 2021** –
 - Rep. Shah's 'Meet & Greet' was attended by many members from AzNA, GCC of AORN, and the Arizona Association of Nurse Anesthetists.
 - AzNA member, Carol Stevens, PhD, RN, asked about smoke evacuation legislation.
 - Patricia and Dan spoke about the hazards of surgical smoke.
 - This discussion led Rep. Shah to voice his support of smoke evacuation and other health care issues.
 - Rep. Shah wondered if legislation was necessary if the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA) agreed to adopt smoke evacuation. The concern was that this gave surgeons the authority to make smoke evacuation decisions during surgery that would impact patients and the perioperative team.
 - Rep. Shah decided to support the smoke evacuation bill.
 - Rep. Shah requested peer-reviewed articles from physician and nursing publications.
 - The most significant article for Rep. Shah was from JAMA as it provided the greatest statistical significance. A cohort study of 75,011 female nurses with 15 or more years of experience, had a 69% greater risk of developing COPD, as compared with the general public (Xie et al. 2021).
- January 2022** –
 - Jennifer Pennock, AORN Government Affairs, assisted Kathy Busby, AzNA Lobbyist, in drafting the bill that was submitted by Rep. Shah.
- January 24, 2022** –
 - Rep. Shah introduced HB 2434 to the House of Representatives.
- January 31, 2022** –
 - At the invitation of Rep. Shah, Dan testified at the House Health and Human Services Committee to educate legislators on the hazards of surgical smoke.
 - The bill passed unanimously out of the Health and Human Services Committee.



- February 15, 2022** –
 - HB 2434 was read and passed in the House.
- February 16, 2022** –
 - HB 2434 was a legislative priority at Healthcare Day at the Capitol 2022.
 - Nurse advocates thanked the House Representatives for their vote.
 - Nurses focused smoke advocacy efforts on Senators by providing them with a flyer and actual samples of cautery pencils with and without smoke evacuation capabilities to illustrate their similarities and how a small change in practice would protect patients and the perioperative team.



- March 9, 2022** –
 - Dan testified at the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.
 - HB 2434 passed 7 – yes, 0 – no, 1 – abstain (member was absent).
- March 24, 2022** –
 - HB 2434 was read and passed in the Senate.



Outcome

Surgical Smoke Legislation Milestones

- January 24, 2022** – Rep. Shah introduced HB2434 in the AZ House of Representatives
- February 15, 2022** – READ and APPROVED, AZ House of Representatives (57 – yes, 2 – no, 1 – abstain)
- March 17, 2022** – READ and APPROVED, AZ Senate (28 – yes, 1 – no, 1 – abstain)
- March 24, 2022** – SIGNED into law by Governor Ducey
- July 1, 2024** – LAW EFFECTIVE – ***“Each outpatient surgical center or hospital shall adopt and implement policies to prevent exposure to surgical smoke by using a surgical smoke evacuation system for each procedure that generates surgical smoke. The department shall ensure compliance with this section during any onsite inspection and in response to any complaint received relating to a violation of this section.”*** (Surgical smoke, 2022)

Implications for Perioperative Nursing

What does this mean for perioperative RNs in Arizona?

- Perioperative RNs in Arizona should:
 - expect to see healthcare facilities establish and implement policies and procedures for the management of surgical smoke that include safe surgical smoke practices within all operating rooms and other procedural areas where surgical smoke is generated;
 - participate on the interdisciplinary teams tasked with developing policies and procedures, selecting and evaluating surgical smoke evacuation equipment and devices, and implementing safe practices;
 - expect that surgical smoke evacuation devices will be used in all procedures where surgical smoke is generated; and
 - continue monitoring the political climate in Arizona in anticipation of introducing RN Circulator legislation in the future.

What are key takeaways for nurses in other states?

- Nurse advocacy makes a difference.
- Nurses **do** influence legislation.
- Know your legislators – meet with them and learn their areas of interest, maintain communication, and establish yourself as their expert resource for issues related to healthcare.
- Know what is going on at your state capitol – stay current on legislative issues, particularly those related to health care.
- Provide peer-reviewed research literature and samples of smoke evacuation pencils and/or equipment.
- Contact AORN Government Affairs at grassroots@aorn.org for smoke evacuation resources.
- Smoke evacuation advocates do not need to have experienced health consequences from exposure to surgical smoke to effectively advocate for it.

References

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Questions? Contact us at aorngrandcanyon@gmail.com