

**WINTER 2024**

Volume 32, Number 1

**Anesthesiology 2023:  
HOD Recap**

By **Jeff Green, MD, MSHA, FASA**  
*Boyan-Keenan Professor of  
Anesthesia Safety  
VCU Department of Anesthesiology  
Richmond, VA*



Dr. Jeffrey A. Green

ASA’s House of Delegates (HOD) met at ANESTHESIOLOGY® 2023 to act upon a variety of topics. The HOD is the place where the proverbial “sausage is made” regarding all the actions of a very large and complex organization.

The House acted upon hundreds of reports, each presented at one of four reference committees, the place where all ASA members can comment on items of business before the HOD. The House is the ultimate authority in the ASA, a member-run and member-driven organization. Even the President and CEO report to the Board of Directors and then the HOD, which oversees all actions of the Board.

Over the past several months, acknowledging a significant impending budget deficit for 2024, ASA’s Program and Resource Prioritization Workgroup, led by then President Elect Ron Harter, MD, worked diligently to identify areas where we could reduce expenses. Though substantial, these margin improvements alone were not sufficient to balance ASA’s 2024 budget. At the financial affairs reference committee, testimony was heard regarding the budget

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*Feature Article*

**Building & Funding a Global Anesthesia Educational Exchange Program**



By **Sergio B. Navarrete, DO**  
*Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, VA*

**Olga Suarez-Winowiski, MD, MSc HSA**  
*VCU Health Systems  
Richmond, VA*

**Program Overview**

*Those who travel to teach, need to “teach the teachers” and leave a legacy on which further developments can be built.*

The Role of Anesthesiology in Global Health – Ram Roth Elizabeth A.M. Frost  
Clifford Gevartz

The Global Anesthesia Program was launched in 2018 under the leadership of Olga Suarez-Winowiski, a faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Department of Anesthesiology.

A key component of this program is to create a learning exchange that is mutually beneficial; United States residents learn to deliver anesthesia care in resource-limited settings, and international residents and

faculty participate in a longitudinal capacity building curriculum emphasizing ultrasound imaging for monitoring and procedure guidance.

In addition, international residents and faculty are hosted in the United States for observerships and continued learning opportunities.

To date, the program has sponsored nine domestic anesthesia residents who have acquired first-hand experience in limited resource pediatrics,



Dr. Sergio B. Navarrete



Dr. Olga Suarez-Winowiski

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# UPDATE

## VSA Executive Board

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The *VSA Update* newsletter is the publication of the Virginia Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. It is published quarterly. The VSA encourages physicians to submit announcements of changes in professional status including name changes, mergers, retirements, and additions to their groups, as well as notices of illness or death. Anecdotes of experiences with carriers, hospital administration, patient complaints, or risk management issues may be useful to share with your colleagues. Editorial comment in italics may, on occasion, accompany articles. Letters to the editor, news and comments are welcome and should be directed to: Brooke Trainer, MD • brooke@vsaHQ.org.

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# Get VSA's New Member App!

We are happy to announce the re-release of our VSA Member App.

Use it to learn about upcoming meetings and advocacy efforts, renew your dues, make a VaSAPAC contribution, read the newsletter, and more!

## iPhone Instructions

- Scan the QR code below..
- Select the forward option (📧) at the bottom of your screen.
- Scroll up and select “Add to Home Screen”.

## Android Instructions:

- Scan the QR code below.
- Tap the menu icon (3 dots in upper right-hand corner) and tap Add to home screen.
- Choose a name for the shortcut, then add it to your home screen.



## President's Message

# Winter Wonderwhat?

By Craig Stopa, MD

VSA President

ASA Delegate

President, Atlantic Anesthesia Inc.



Dr. Craig Stopa

I cannot believe that my first year serving as VSA president is coming to an end. I am thankful that the VSA board and members entrusted me. It's been an honor serving the Commonwealth, and I look forward to another fantastic

year.

So far this year, I have focused on three main topics: workforce shortages, balance billing, and Medicare/Medicaid payment cuts. I will give a brief update on those three topics. Moreover, I will give an election recap and stress the importance of giving to the VaSAPAC as the legislative session is quickly approaching.

In terms of workforce shortages, we are still awaiting the results of the request the Senate HELP Committee sent out in March. The goal was for them to better understand the views on the drivers of healthcare workforce shortages and hear ideas on potential solutions. I continue to be intrigued to see what comes from this request.

Next up is balance billing/No Surprises Act. In my last newsletter, I summarized the federal court's ruling in favor of the Texas Medical Association's (TMA) fourth lawsuit. Due to this ruling, the dispute portal was closed until its processes were updated. The IDR entities paid and received prior to August 3 continued to be processed. However, claims that lack payment or submitted after that date needed to wait for the new fee structure to be finalized.

On November 28, 2023, the Departments released the [No Surprises Act \(NSA\) Independent Dispute Resolution \(IDR\) Batching and Air Ambulance Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) and [FAQs about Affordable Care Act and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Implementation Part 63 \(FAQs Part 63\)](#) to provide guidance in advance of the portal reopening. Please review at your convenience at [cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov).

To follow is Medicare/Medicaid payments. This past April, the House introduced bill H.R. 2474. The bill was then referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and to the Committee on Ways and Means. It was next referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

However, the bill is still sitting in Sub-committee. If passed, there would be an annual increase of Medicare payments to physicians. The ASA has formally endorsed and is actively engaged in supporting this bill. In terms of service code G2211, it was announced in early November that it will be implemented January 1, 2024. It is estimated that 90% of the projected 3.3% cuts to anesthesia for 2024 are the result of the implementation of G2211.

The ASA continues to work with the Surgical Care Coalition and the American Medical Association to secure sufficient Congressional support to pass legislation to stop implementation. Stay tuned.

Lastly, I would like to address the upcoming legislative season. The Democrats took control of both chambers this election. Also, we now have zero physicians in the legislature. It is more crucial than ever that we educate them on the importance of the physician-led anesthesia care team and why it is best for patients. If you have a relationship with either your Representative or Senator, please reach out to them. If you do not, please start one. I would also stress the importance of a strong and robust VaSAPAC. This would give us a bigger advantage during the upcoming session. If you haven't already donated, please consider doing so today.

I hope everyone enjoyed their fall. Mine could have been better as my alma mater Texas Christian University (TCU) had an underwhelming season and were not even bowl eligible.

Do your best to stay warm this winter and cozy up to a fireplace and enjoy the stories from our fantastic physicians of the Commonwealth. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or comments, and thank you for all that you do!

# Expanding Access to Non-Opioid Options for Veterans

By Brooke Trainer, MD, FASA

Anesthesiologist/Intensivist, VCU Health  
Central VA HCS, Richmond VA  
Editor, VSA Newsletter



Dr. Brooke Albright-Trainer

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has made significant progress in reducing the number of Veterans being prescribed an opioid by 67% over the past decade. However, the majority of Veterans who receive opioid prescriptions from the

VA get them for short-term pain care, such as surgery or an injury. National statistics indicate that up to 9% of surgical patients go on to misuse opioids – making the VA's operating room a potential gateway for the opioid epidemic. Opioids can also cause adverse events, longer hospital stays, and unwanted side effects.

Fortunately, the field of non-opioid options for acute pain is expanding and changing national clinical practice and payment standards.

Current federal guidelines support maximum access to non-opioids. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Clinical Practice Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Pain state that non-opioid ther-



apies are as effective as opioids for many common types of acute pain and urge clinicians to maximize the use of non-opioid therapies. In addition, the Non-Opioid Prevent Addiction

in the Nation Act (NOPAIN Act), passed in 2022, fully incentivizes the use of non-opioid approaches by allowing the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide separate Medicare reimbursement for non-opioids used to manage pain in both the hospital outpatient department (HOPD) and the ambulatory surgery center (ASC) setting. Under that law, Medicare will cover non-opioid drugs and devices with post-operative indications that do not on the body's opioid receptors. Currently, the VANF only includes 50% of the therapies that meet this standard.

With these changes in the field, the VA must keep pace. Some non-opioid medications and devices are offered to veterans receiving care at the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) – but not all. Increasing access to all available, FDA-approved, safe, and effective non-opioid treatment approaches, not a select few, will ensure that the VA is in compliance with federal guidelines and ensure parity across federal payers.

A legislative proposal put forward by the national organization Voices for Non-Opioid Choices would ensure that VA clinicians and the patients they serve are not falling behind



clinical standards or receiving sub-standard treatment options. Visit their Action Center today to tell your member of Congress to support this proposal.

## References

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, November 3). CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for prescribing opioids for pain - united states, 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/rr/rr7103a1.htm>

## Exchange Program, from page 1

OB, and trauma anesthesia management in our partner institutions. Five international residents from Mexico have been hosted by VCU and participated in the exchange observership opportunity.

We have collaboratively facilitated two workshops in Toluca, in 2020 and 2022. Each year over forty anesthesia residents and fifteen staff anesthesiologists receive training. The experience has been invaluable to all residents and faculty, both domestic and abroad.

In 2023, we organized the first Global

Anesthesia Program POCUS Seminar for international anesthesia residents and faculty in Toluca, Mexico. It consisted of (A) introduction to US principles and clinical applications of US-guided TTE and regional anesthesia; (B) hands-on workshops; and (C) week-long in-hospital clinical application of acquired skills. Overall, we trained sixty residents and twenty-five faculty members.

Funding is derived from contributions to our 503(c) non-profit account, annual silent auctions, and faculty and community support. Funds are used to strengthen pro-

gram impact, purchase of equipment, and assistance to US and international residents for traveling and lodging.

## Charity Golf Tournament

As part of our fundraising efforts in 2024, we are planning a charity golf tournament to be held in Richmond, Virginia. The golf tournament will be a four-person scramble format to be held in the fall of 2024. Entry fees and sponsorship levels are to be determined.

# Anesthesiology 2023 – Medical Student Governing Council Report

By Mathew Ciurash, Melissa Leaf, David Miller, Hannah Chung, Panth Doshi, Alexandra Canonico and Matthew McCarron

## Governing Council Report Updates for ASA

The medical student component had an incredibly productive year and the Annual meeting highlighted some of the accomplishments. To kick off the meeting, there was a touching Keynote speech by Dr. Travis Reece-Nguyen, followed by updates from the team and voting for the next council. Some of the most important highlights are outlined below.

## Keynote Speech and Interactive Discussion

The keynote speech titled “Unapologetically Authentic: Finding Your Way Through Training” was given by Dr. Travis Reece-Nguyen, a pediatric anesthesiologist at Stanford Children’s Hospital.

He shared his personal and professional journey through medicine as a cisgender gay man, and the work he continues today promoting gender-affirming care education, quality improvement, and mentorship for the LGBTQ+ community. He engaged students in thought-provoking exercises and challenged students to be their most authentic selves at work, as the future faces of anesthesiology.

His message on the importance of representation, advocacy, and introspection was both inspiring and uplifting.



Students photographed from left to right: Mathew Ciurash, Melissa Leaf, David Miller, Hannah Chung, Panth Doshi, Alexandra Canonico, Matthew McCarron

## Diversity and Inclusion Update & Recognition

Big updates came from the annual Diversity and Inclusion Liaison position for the ASA Medical Student Component, reflecting a year of profound growth and impactful initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive anesthesiology community. Highlights included the ASA Visiting Rotation Scholarship, founded this year, benefiting 12 underrepresented minority medical students. They were the recipients of a scholarship to ease the financial burden of away rotations, and this will be continued through the next year.

The continuation of the Annual Faces of Anesthesiology panel was also aimed

at amplifying the voices of minorities and inspiring future generations. Collaboration with various organizations in the Underrepresented in Medicine Meet-Up event paved the way for potential partnerships, while expanding the Leaders in DEI video series aims to continue inspiring dialogue within the community.

All of these accomplishments exemplify that commitment to diversity isn’t just a checkbox; it’s a driving force for innovation and better patient care. These initiatives have been made possible by the ASA and thanks goes to them for unwavering support and commitment to diversity and inclusion. The

*Continued on page 6*

## HOD Recap, from page 1

deficit and overall, the feeling was that the ASA’s significant effort to cut expenses along with a small increase in dues revenues would balance the shortfall. A modest dues increase of \$55 per active member (excluding early-career members) was required to balance the 2024 budget. The HOD, after thoughtful deliberation, approved the dues increase.

The HOD also elects ASA’s officers, commonly referred to as the Administrative

Council (AC). Dr. Patrick Giam joins the Executive Committee as First Vice President. Dr. Tracey Straker, from the mid-atlantic caucus, was elected Vice Speaker, and Dr. Paul Yost was elected Assistant Secretary, joining the nine returning members of the AC.

As your Director, I was pleased to lead the very talented and enthusiastic Virginia delegation to the HOD representing your interests in the ASA. Your delegation rep-

resents a wide range of practice types and locations across the Commonwealth and is dedicated to making sure that the business in the HOD aligns with our practices in Virginia. As always, if there is anything I can do to support your practice or answer any questions about the ASA, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at Jeffrey.green@vcuhealth.org.

## Medical Student Governing Council, from page 5

DEI position and the MSC look forward to continued progress and a more diverse future in anesthesiology.

### Governing Council Candidate Election Speeches & Voting

The Medical Student Component Governing Council speeches and elections were held with an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation. This year's elections were notably one of the closest in recent memory, underscoring the strength of all the candidates who presented compelling visions for the future. The level of engagement and the high caliber of speeches showcased the dedication and passion within the medical student community.

As gratitude is expressed to all those who participated, the selected team enthusiastically looks forward to the year ahead, aimed at shaping a vibrant and dynamic future for the ASA. The elected representatives are listed here and are sure to bring a positive

impact to the future of the medical student component.

- President: Mathew Ciurash
- President Elect: Rebecca Nika Tsai
- Secretary: Emily Peng
- Senior Advisor: Tiffie Keung
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Liaison: Ines Debbiche
- Delegate to AMA Medical Student Section: Lucas Kasson
- Alternate Delegate: Hannah Gallegos
- Membership Outreach coordinator: Renne Lu

### Outstanding AIG Program Recognition and Presentations

With a new selection process developed this year, the MSC was able to recognize three Anesthesiology Interest Groups for awards in Excellence and Achievement.

The Outstanding AIG awards recognize AIGs that show an exceptional level of

participation, enthusiasm, program quality, professionalism, and involvement. Each is awarded \$500 to use toward AIG activities in the coming year. The winners this year were:

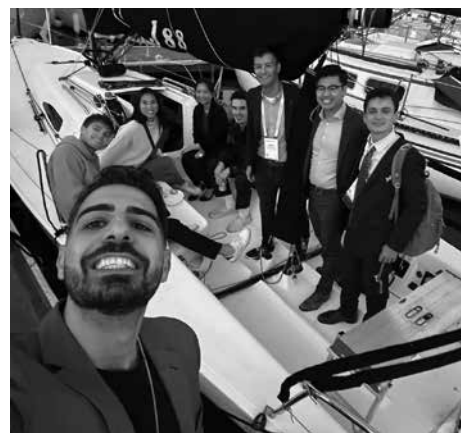
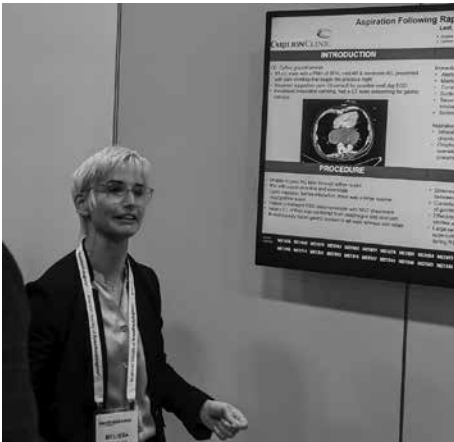
- Best Overall – Oakland University William Beaumont
- Most Innovative – Vanderbilt University
- Best New – Marian University

### Recognition and Adjournment

The meeting concluded with recognition to the previous serving members of the student council for their hard work and dedication to providing opportunities for medical students to pursue careers in Anesthesiology. The VSA can boast very active student members in the meetings proceedings which are pictured below.

We look forward to seeing everyone next year in Philadelphia!

## Photos from ASA Anesthesiology 2023



# Leadership Spokesperson Training at the ASA Annual Conference

By **Melissa Leaf, DVM**

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine  
Class of 2024  
Roanoke, VA



Melissa Leaf, DVM

One of the highlights of this year's ASA conference was attending Leadership Spokesperson Training. Attendees were taught how to deliver information effectively to lawmakers and the media. We learned

techniques for conducting successful interviews, how to be interesting, brief, informative, and deliver an effective message to promote awareness of key issues.

We learned to focus on one important message that we want to convey, and to state that point at the beginning and end of our statement. That way, it doesn't get lost in excessive wording or too many points. For example, I believe that maintaining physician-led, team-based care at the VA ensures the safety of our veterans.

This should be followed with a few key supporting facts: The U.S Department of Veteran Affairs has proposed eliminating physician anesthesiologists from the surgical team, replacing them with nurses. There is no independent research that shows nurse anesthetists achieve the same outcomes as the more highly trained physician anesthesiologists.

All our nation's top hospitals insist on physician led care; why would we provide a different standard of care for our veterans, many of whom are older and have complex medical issues from exposure to burn pits and Agent Orange? It is helpful to add a personal story or connection to the issue. My husband is a combat veteran and receives care at the VA. I feel he deserves the same level of safe, effective care as everyone else here in Virginia. Why should he get a lower level of care because of his military service?

Include an action plan. Now that you've inspired your listeners, what can they do



*We received helpful real-time feedback on our interviews. The interviews were also recorded and we were sent copies to review.*

to help? If you're interested in maintaining safe, high-quality, physician-led care for our nation's veterans, please submit a comment to: <https://www.safevacare.org/campaign/40485/>

Participants in Leadership Spokesperson Training reviewed the facts on the No Surprises Act, patient-centered, physician-led care, and plans to reduce student loan interest. We then participated in mock interviews to practice our delivery. We were given tips on how to interview effectively, both in-person and virtually. Clothing should be simple and non-distracting, and jewel-toned colors show up well on TV. For virtual interviews, avoid messy or cluttered backgrounds. A virtual background creates a distracting "alien" or "halo" effect when you move; an option for someone planning on giving virtual interviews is to invest in a small green

screen that clips onto the back of the chair. This allows for crisp edges of the virtual background. Lighting is equally important, avoid sitting with a bright window behind you, this creates a dark silhouette. Lighting should come from the front to illuminate your face. When conducting virtual interviews, try to make eye contact with the lens of your camera rather than the eyes of the person interviewing you. If using a laptop, you may need to raise it by placing it on books to bring it to a more natural level with your face.

We received helpful real-time feedback on our interviews. The interviews were also recorded and we were sent copies to review. I admit, I haven't been able to bring myself to watch my recorded interview, but I'm sure it will be a good learning experience if I can do so. The real-time feedback was very helpful, and the exercises provided excellent practice.

Thanks to the ASA's Leadership Spokesperson Training, I feel more confident in my ability to advance the specialty of anesthesiology.

# Dr. Alice Coombs Becomes First Black Female President of Medical Society of Virginia

*At the helm of the professional organization, the chair of VCU's Department of Anesthesiology will draw on more than 30 years of experience in advocacy and health care policy reform*

**By Laura Ingles**  
*VCU School of Medicine*

“Wherever you practice medicine, you are the voice of the patients you take care of.”

Alice Coombs, MD, has built her career around this belief. That’s why she not only takes care of patients in the hospital at VCU Medical Center, but she also advocates for them at the local, state and national levels.

Coombs, who’s been at VCU School of Medicine since 2017 and chair of the Department of Anesthesiology since 2021, was recently elected president of the Medical Society of Virginia.

She is the first Black female president - and only the fourth female president - of the MSV, which was founded in 1821. And according to the American Medical Association, the first person ever to serve as president of two state medical societies, having served as president of the Massachusetts Medical Society in 2010.

Coombs said she got involved in medical societies early in her career because she wanted to do more than provide health care — she wanted to improve it. And for her, that means examining and challenging public policies.

“Part of understanding what patients have to go through to get proper access to care, is understanding the landscape of health care and health disparities, and that takes into account the public policy perspective,” Coombs said. “Working in the medical societies or any professional organization allows you to not be on the sidelines with a simple vote. It allows you to have a scalable impact.”

## **An advocate for patients and physicians**

Discussing health disparities wasn’t part of the curriculum when she was a medical student at UCLA, Coombs said. She and her peers didn’t discuss social determinants of health, microaggressions or implicit biases in the clinical setting. But she had observed those realities as a little girl growing up in a mostly Black neighborhood in Compton, Ca,



*Alice Coombs, MD*  
*Photo by Allen Jones, VCU Enterprise Marketing and Communications*

*Working in the medical societies or any professional organization allows you to not be on the sidelines with a simple vote. It allows you to have a scalable impact.*

in the 1960s, and in medical school she saw the stark contrast between hospitals in different parts of the city. She recalled rotating through Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital, which serves a primarily Black and Spanish-speaking population.

“That’s where I learned about disparities more than any other place, and it was through pure observation,” she said. “It wasn’t like my instructors ever brought up health care disparities, health care equality, equity or anything. It wasn’t really coined that, and you have to understand that the literature was very weak back then.”

Against the guidance of her medical school adviser, Coombs became the first UCLA graduate to match into the internal medicine residency program at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard University’s academic medical center. She then completed a second residency in anesthesiology and fellowships in both critical care medicine and cardiothoracic anesthesia.

Over the course of her decades-long career, she helped implement a Massachusetts law around addressing adverse events in patient care, led the American Medical Association’s Commission to Eliminate Health Care Disparities, chaired the commission’s diversity committee and served on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission during the Obama administration. When she is one of the only physicians in a room of decision-makers, Coombs believes it is her responsibility to speak up for both her colleagues and her patients, calling herself a “touch-the-patient-doctor.”

In her role as MSV president, one of her top priorities will be payment reform for doctors, which she said will be a “major issue for the rest of our lives.”

“When it comes to advocating at the state and federal legislatures, the Medical Society of Virginia has done a phenomenal job,” Coombs said. “I’m very proud to be part of a society that takes seriously its charge of really advocating for physicians and patients and advocating for the sanctity and protection of the physician-patient relationship.”

Art Saavedra, M.D., dean of the VCU School of Medicine, attended Coombs’ swearing-in ceremony and commended her career-long dedication to improving both the health of her patients and the landscape of health care.

“Dr. Coombs exemplifies the School of Medicine’s values of diversity, equity and inclusion, collaboration and community engagement,” Saavedra said. “We are extraordinarily lucky to work alongside and learn from Dr. Coombs as she continues to blaze trails in patient care and advocacy.”



# Congratulations to FAER's New President and Chief Scientific Officer

The Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research (FAER) is proud to announce Max B. Kelz, MD, PhD, of the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, as the President and Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) of FAER beginning in 2024.

Dr. Kelz is the Lee A. Fleisher, MD Professor and Vice Chair of Research for the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at the University of Pennsylvania. An accomplished neuroanesthesiologist funded continuously by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for roughly two decades, Dr. Kelz is a prolific researcher who has authored over 95 peer-reviewed research publications.

Throughout his career, Dr. Kelz has maintained a strong relationship with FAER. The recipient of a FAER Research Training Grant in 2004, Dr. Kelz has mentored Medical Student Anesthesia Research Fellows and Mentored Research Training Grantees on multiple occasions. He was appointed as a member of the Academy of Research Mentors in Anesthesiology (ARMA) in 2017 before serving as President of ARMA from 2019 – 2021.

Dr. Kelz has acted as a member of the American Society of Anesthesiologists' (ASA) Education Track Subcommittee on Neuro Anesthesia and the Committee on Research since 2022. He has also Chaired the Steering Committee of the Anesthesia Research Council (ARC). ARC is a collaboration between FAER, the ASA, and the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS).

"With a Research Training Grant, FAER was instrumental in helping launch my academic career. Over the ensuing two decades, I have lived the physician-scientist dream," said Dr. Kelz.

"Inspired by a case of delayed emergence in a patient with narcolepsy, I've pursued basic neuroscience research to tackle fundamental questions at the heart of anesthesiology – how and why are we conscious and

*With a Research Training Grant, FAER was instrumental in helping launch my academic career. Over the ensuing two decades, I have lived the physician-scientist dream.*

what do general anesthetics do to reversibly disrupt our perception of the world?

"I am fully committed to FAER's mission to develop the next generation of physician-investigators and am absolutely thrilled to follow in the giant footsteps of Dr. Jim Eisenach as FAER's next President. I look forward to working with the outstanding FAER staff, its Board of Directors, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists as we continue to enable today's medical students, residents, fellows, and junior faculty to realize their own academic journeys."

FAER is excited for Dr. Kelz to take on his role as President and CSO and looks forward to the positive impact his contributions will have on the Foundation's work.

As FAER welcomes Dr. Kelz, we also want to take this opportunity to celebrate and thank Dr. Eisenach for his years of service as its President. Dr. Eisenach's guidance and scientific expertise have proven tremendously beneficial to FAER's growth and pursuit of its mission since he first accepted the presidency in 2016. Among his many successes, Dr. Eisenach's time as President has seen FAER award 122 grants to physician-investigators, match 431 medical student fellows to host institutions, and sponsor 342 resident scholars' attendance at ANESTHESIOLOGY®.

"It's been my honor to lead FAER's efforts towards its mission to develop the next generation of physician-investigators and

its vision to create a nurturing community of investigators that will last through their careers," said Dr. Eisenach.

"FAER's work in partnership with academic departments to support the specialty's early career investigators is unparalleled, and I've seen time and time again the incredibly positive impact FAER funding has on our grantees, resident scholars, and student fellows.

"Over these eight years, the FAER Board has strategically improved FAER's impact, including a 43% increase in the funding awarded through our Mentored Research Training Grant, the development of a highly successful annual meeting for these awardees and those funded by IARS, the establishment of multiple co-sponsored grants with subspecialty societies and academic organizations, the endowment of the FAER National Academy of Medicine (NAM) Fellowship in Anesthesiology, establishing a full day of programing at ANESTHESIOLOGY for students, residents, and junior faculty, and outreach to MD, PhD student organizations. I'm proud of this growth and want to thank FAER's supporters for making them possible.

"Dr. Max Kelz will succeed me as FAER President in 2024. His expertise and enthusiasm for the role will be a great asset to FAER and I look forward to hearing about the Foundation's continuing success under his leadership.

"To all those I had the pleasure to work with during my time as FAER President, thank you for making my time in this role so rewarding and meaningful."

Please join FAER in congratulating Dr. Kelz on his appointment and thanking Dr. Eisenach for his years of outstanding leadership. Simultaneously, FAER would like to thank all those who applied for the President and CSO position. The applicants constituted a truly exceptional cohort of leaders in anesthesiology and research. FAER is honored by the commitment to its mission shown by so many.

# 2023 Virginia Election Recap

By **Lauren Schmitt**

*Commonwealth Strategy Group*

On November 7, 2023, all 140 legislative seats (State Senate and House of Delegates) were up for election. With the first election since the new district lines were drawn under the redistricting process adopted by voters in 2020, this election cycle brought: historic turnover with record numbers of retirements, incumbents losing primaries, and brand-new districts for everyone playing a role in the skyrocketing cost and contentious nature of these legislative campaigns.

There was a lot of uncertainty going into the election. Governor Youngkin was campaigning all over Virginia for Republican candidates, with the hope of flipping the Senate and having a Republican trifecta. There was a lot of speculation about how and if the recent Supreme Court decision regarding abortion would impact some races.

After numerous close races, the results are Democratic control of both houses:

51D-49R with the close call race in Petersburg going to **Kim Taylor (R)** over Kimberly Pope Adams (D); and 21D-19R with the close call race in Williamsburg going to **Danny Diggs (R)** over Monty Mason (D).

So what happens next? Assuming the current results stand and the Democrats will control both chambers, we will prepare for leadership announcements, committee chair negotiations and committee assignments. We could also see changes to the House and Senate clerk's offices, like we did in 2020.

It is important to remember that the Governor can veto legislation and neither chamber has obtained a "veto-proof" majority. This will likely result in the Democratic legislature passing bills that are then vetoed by the Governor. In order for anything to be passed and signed into law, there will have to be compromise from both sides.

## Key Race Results

### State Senate:

Democrats control the chamber- 21D-18R, 1 undecided (Pre-election, Democratic control)

Heading into Election Day, Democrats were considered safe in 17 seats, while Republicans had 16 safe districts. That left 7 seats that would determine control of the



40-member chamber. Please note, the Lt. Governor can break ties in the State Senate so 20 Republican members would be considered a Republican majority.

Below are the 7 districts that decided control of the chamber. The winner's name is in bold.

### **District 4 - (D) Trish White-Boyd/(R) David Suetterlein\***

This race in the Roanoke area was considered slightly competitive due to past support of Democratic candidates (with the exception of Terry McAuliffe in 2021). Senator Suetterlein ran a solid campaign with a large financial advantage.

### **District 16 - (D) Schuyler VanValkenburg/(R) Siobhan Dunnavant\***

Considered the most Democratic of all the toss-up seats, Del. VanValkenburg, a moderate teacher challenged Sen. Siobhan Dunnavant, a moderate doctor, in the Henrico area. This seat was one of the most expensive of the election cycle, where abortion and library books were the most popular issues of campaign.

### **District 17 - (D) Clint Jenkins/(R) Emily Brewer**

This newly drawn, open Senate seat in Suffolk was considered very swingy with Governor Youngkin winning it in 2021 with 52% but former Congresswoman Luria winning it by 51%. Del. Brewer emerged from an expensive primary and hit the ground running with momentum and a well-financed campaign. Del. Clint Jenkins has run a campaign more focused on media, rather than a ground game. This district came down to voter turnout.

### **\*\*District 24 - (D) Monty Mason\*/(R) Danny Diggs**

Senator Mason was considered the most

endangered incumbent heading into the 2023 Election cycle. The new district, which includes Williamsburg, York and Poquoson City, is the swingiest of swing districts. While Mason currently represents Williamsburg, Diggs is the Sheriff of Poquoson. This race was extremely expensive and filled with explosive accusations of candidates positions and reputations.

### **District 27 - (D) Joel Griffin/(R) Tara Durant/(I) Monica Gary**

This open seat is one of the most fascinating of the cycle with a 3rd party candidate on the ballot as well as write in (by Matt Strickland, who lost to Del. Tara Durant in the primary). Monica Gary, the independent, is currently on the Board of Supervisors in Stafford County, winning that seat as an independent in 2021. Joel Griffin, a small business owner in Fredericksburg, also had a competitive democratic primary in June. With multiple names on the ballot, this district was one of the hardest to predict.

### **District 30 - (D) Danica Roem/(R) Bill Woolf**

Del. Danica Roem was unopposed for the Democratic nomination in this seat. Bill Woolf won the Republican primary in June. This district is considered lean democrat and politically stayed under the radar during the campaign.

### **District 31- (D) Russet Perry/(R) Juan Pablo Segura**

Throughout the campaign, this newly drawn district was expected to be the most expensive of the cycle - with both state and national money flowing into the area. Loudoun County was considered safe for Republicans prior to 2017 but flipped blue for a few cycles. In 2021, Loudoun County Public Schools became ground zero and this district was narrowly won by Governor Youngkin.

### House of Delegates:

Democrats control the chamber- 51D-48R-1 undecided. (Pre-Election, Republican control)

Heading into Election Day, there are 15 seats that would determine control of the 100-member chamber. Below are the 15 districts that decided control of the chamber.

## Election Recap, from page 10

The winner's name is in bold.

**District 21 - (D) Josh Thomas**/(R) John Stirrup

This open seat in Prince William County is a tossup seat; it voted blue in the 2022 congressional race and red in the 2021 gubernatorial race. This race drew attention over the summer when John Stirrup was recorded as supporting a complete abortion ban. Due to the competitive nature and the DC media market, this district was one of the most expensive house races.

**District 22 - (D) Travis Nembhard**/(R) Ian Lovejoy

Another race in Prince William County, competitive but leans Republican. Both candidates have impressive resumes, community ties and the ability to raise big money.

**District 30 - (D) Rob Banse / (R) Geary Higgins**

A Loudoun County District that on paper should not have been competitive and went red in the last two elections. Geary Higgins is a former school board member, former Supervisors and ran an unsuccessful campaign for State Senate in 2019. However, Rob Banse is a pastor with deep community ties and has outraised Higgins and made this district one to watch.

**District 41 - (D) Lily Franklin / (R) Chris Obenshain**

This Roanoke based district voted for Governor Youngkin by 10 points. However, as this district is an open seat at includes Virginia Tech, it has forced both parties to work hard to communicate with voters.

**District 57 - (D) Susanna Gibson / (R) David Owen**

Henrico County Open Seat that drew national attention when it was revealed that Susanna Gibson had videos on an internet website. The district is entirely within SD 16, bringing this district lots of attention. In September, Gibson lost support of the Democratic Caucus and multiple organizations, changing this from a clear swing district to a leans Republican.

**District 58 - (D) Rodney Willett\*** / (R) Riley Shia

Del. Willett was one of the most endangered Democratic incumbents in a district that leans D. This is his third campaign in a swing seat- and he is considered a good campaigner with a proven ability to raise money.

**District 64 - (D) Leonard B. Lacey / (R) Paul Milde**

Milde has run two unsuccessful campaigns in the past but has the determination to win. While he didn't self-fund as he did in past campaigns, his business experience, board appointments and community relationships have made him a strong candidate. Leonard Lacey faced an uphill battle but ran a strong campaign.

**District 65 - (D) Josh Cole / (R) Lee Peters**

Josh Cole, who lost his re-election in 2021 to Del. Durant (running for Senate) decided to run for this open seat once again. While on paper, the district is more Democratic after redistricting, Lee Peters is the Sheriff in Stafford County which had made this competitive district against two elected officials an interesting one.

**District 71 - (D) Jessica Anderson / (R) Amanda Batten\***

Del. Batten is a strong republican candidate and legislator. While on paper, the district is considered swing with a Republican lean, the Democratic candidate had a chance to win it.

**District 75 - (D) Stephen Miller-Pitts / (R) Carrie Coyner\***

This district leans Republican, but in October, the Democratic caucus decided to give Miller-Pitts about \$500,000 to make a late splash in this district. Del. Coyner, running for her 3rd term, is known as a moderate who works hard for her district and is an impressive campaigner but Democrats saw an opportunity in the Dobbs environment.

**\*\*District 82 - (D) Kimberly Pope Adams / (R) Kim Taylor\***

Del. Taylor is considered one of the most vulnerable incumbents. She surprised the political establishment when she won a Dem leaning district in 2021. While the district became less Democratic in redistricting, it is still seen as a tough seat for Republicans.

The race will come down to Petersburg, a Democratic city that has gained a lot of attention and resources from the Youngkin administration. Kimberly Pope Adams, who won a 3-way democratic primary in June, was considered the strongest Dem candidate due to her community connections in Dinwiddie, the traditionally republican part of the district.

**District 84 - (D) Nadarius Clark / (R) Michael Dillender**

Nadarius Clark had to resign his House seat in April in order to run and move in this newly created swing district. The district is considered 50/50 and both candidates have worked hard and raised healthy campaign accounts to compete for this district.

**District 89 - (D) Karen Jenkins / (R) Baxter Ennis**

Karen Jenkins is a school board member and wife of Del. Clint Jenkins (running for State Senate). While the district leans Republican, Democrats believed Karen was a strong candidate to run on the same ticket as her husband.

**District 94 - (D) Phil Hernandez / (R) Andy Pittman**

This district leans pretty heavily Democratic and Hernandez outraised his opponent, 2-1.

**District 97 - (D) Michael Feggans / (R) Karen Greenhalgh\***

The district is considered very swingy- in the last three election cycles - the incumbent has fallen to their challenger. It voted blue in the 2022 congressional race and red in the 2021 gubernatorial race. As with Del. Taylor, Del. Greenhalgh was the other vulnerable Republican incumbent. Michael Feggans, a veteran, is considered a top recruit by the House Democrats.

# Dr. Varun Dixit Wins Statewide Governor's Award for Sustainability Initiatives

*Story and photo from HCA Virginia's Stories and Testimonials online*

Dr. Varun Dixit won the 2023 Governor's Environmental Excellence Gold Medal Award in Sustainability

Dr. Varun Dixit is an HCA Virginia cardiac anesthesiologist who launched an environmental sustainability program at Henrico Doctors' Hospital. His ideas were not only innovative within a hospital setting, but also scalable. He is actively working to expand his ideas to other HCA Healthcare facilities.

His initiatives earned him a gold medal in the 2023 Virginia Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards. These awards recognize successful and innovative efforts across all industries that improve Virginia's environment. Dixit's two-pronged approach reduces the negative impact of healthcare on the environment by recycling to decrease facility waste, and implementing low-flow anesthesia techniques to reduce excess anesthesia gas emissions.

Combating climate change and preserving the planet for future generations is more than a hobby for Dixit.

"For me, it's not about passion – it's about urgency," he said. "We are running out of time. I do this because it's the right thing to do."

When he joined Henrico Doctors' Hospital in 2017, he said there was no recycling program in place. He soon embarked on a robust environmental education program in the hospital, engaging operating room staff, environmental services, and hospital administrators about the need to recycle the facility's waste and promote sustainability in healthcare.

After receiving approval to pilot a new recycling project in the cardiac ORs, he quickly expanded the program to encompass all of the hospital's ORs, as well as the cardiac catheterization lab, endoscopy, and obstetrics. Henrico Doctors' Hospital now recycles more than 150,000 pounds of waste every year, equivalent to approxi-



*For me, it's not about passion, it's about urgency. We are running out of time. I do this because it's the right thing to do.*

mately 6% of the facility's total waste. With ongoing education and broad participation, the entire operating room staff has become champions of recycling, taking pride in the results achieved and carrying the message into their homes and community.

Leveraging the success and widespread acceptance of the recycling program, Dixit then started working to adopt low-flow anesthesia techniques, which are better for both patients and the planet. These changes reduce excess anesthesia gas emissions, which are known to be significant contributors to ozone depletion and the "greenhouse gas" effect.

"I am most proud of how I was able to bring everyone together," he said. "I think that's the biggest thing ... all of the OR staff, circulating nurses, scrub techs, and all of the CRNAs. All of them came along and did a nice job to make a difference. When people do things when no one is looking ... that is the most incredible achievement."



**Spring 2024 Grant Cycle**  
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***APSF-FAER Mentored Research Training Grant***

Research Areas	Letter of Intent Submissions	Percent of Research Time	Funding and Duration
Patient Safety	12/1/2023-1/1/2024	60%	\$300,000 over 2 years

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**RESEARCH IN  
EDUCATION GRANT**

**Eligibility**

Faculty member of any rank  
(Junior or senior faculty)

**Research Areas**

Education research

**Funding and Duration**

\$100,000 over two years

**Percent of Research Time**

40%

**APPLY AT**

[FAER.ORG/REG](https://FAER.ORG/REG)

**MENTORED RESEARCH  
TRAINING GRANT**

**Eligibility**

Faculty members who have completed their  
core anesthesia residency within the past  
10 years

**Research Areas**

All areas of research that contribute to  
advances in patient care and can lead  
to sustained extramural research will be  
considered

**Funding and Duration**

\$250,000 over two years

**Percent of Research Time**

75%

**APPLY AT**

[FAER.ORG/MRTG](https://FAER.ORG/MRTG)

**RESEARCH  
FELLOWSHIP GRANT**

**Eligibility**

Anesthesiology trainee after CA-1 year

**Research Areas**

Basic science, clinical, translational,  
health services or education research

**Funding and Duration**

\$75,000 over one year

**Percent of Research Time**

80%

**APPLY AT**

[FAER.ORG/RFG](https://FAER.ORG/RFG)

# VSA Honors ASA Leader Paul Pomerantz

## ASA CEO Retiring in April After 10 Years



The American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) has announced that Paul Pomerantz, FACHE, chief executive officer, plans to retire at the end of his contract in April 2024.

“On behalf of ASA’s Board of Directors, Senior Team, and more than 56,000 members, we want to thank Paul for his extraordinary leadership and impact over the decade he has led the Society,” said ASA President Michael W. Champeau, MD, FAAP, FASA.

“Always a strategic leader, Paul has played an enormous role in transforming ASA by implementing successful member-facing programs and initiatives as well as a renewed focus on strategic planning, including the creation of strategic pillars to align key initiatives throughout the organization.”

At left, VSA leaders presented Dr. Pomerantz with a retirement gift. Pictured left to right are Dr. Marie Sankaran-Raval, Dr. Casey Dowling, Mr. Pomerantz, Dr. Brooke Trainer, and Dr. Jeff Green.

### Become a Contributor to the *VSA Update*

Please send your story or feature ideas about your colleagues, your practices, or issues facing anesthesiologists to

**Brooke Trainer, MD**  
VSA Update Editor  
at [brooke@vsahq.org](mailto:brooke@vsahq.org)



### Herald a New Age



*Dr. Jaikumar Rangappa*

In the winter of our discontent whole world is in turmoil  
In sheer hate & belligerence we all embroil  
Let us implore the good Lord to forgive to toil  
For greener world for creatures on the soil  
With selfish indifference that we did spoil.

Time to forget differences & fight the climate change  
As we share the air, water & the lands rearrange  
As temporary guests on planet stage  
must share Our Blue Heaven with all beings in every lair  
With Christ’s message to love everywhere.

With blessings of Buddha to Gandhi’s nonviolence  
In compassion for needy, aim for a new emergence  
For a peaceful world in harmony  
Play Mother Nature Symphony.

As wild animals, birds & bees migrate with no borders  
Wish humans follow with no fences & violent orders  
Freedom will dawn with every bright sunrise  
With respect to all creatures from the wise

Let us herald the new age with God’s grace  
With a coming New Year let us hug & embrace!

# Encourage Your Practice Administrators to Join VSA

*The VSA encourages your practice administrators to join! We have two options:*

**1**

If 90% or more of a group's physician anesthesiologists are VSA Active members in good standing and all members will be on a single group bill, the annual dues are FREE.

**2**

If less than 90% of a group's physician anesthesiologists are ASA Active members in good standing, or the group does not participate in group dues billing, the annual dues are \$75.00

To have your practice administrator join, go to: <https://www.asahq.org/member-center/join-asa/educational>

- On this page, click on the category you're interested in – in this case, its: Anesthesia Practice Administrators and Executives – Educational Member
- Click on the + sign next to the title
- The box that opens, will contain full details and the membership rate(s)

## Early-Career Membership Program

*Three years. One sign-up. 100% value.*

The first three years in practice are especially demanding - but you can take out some of the complexity. ASA and VSA have bundled our biggest events, most sought-after education, and just-in-time resources into a three-year, zero-complication membership that addresses many of the time, cost, and emotional challenges you're likely to face.

The earlier you sign up, the bigger the advantages!



ACE, Summaries of Emerging Evidence (SEE), and other hugely popular courses to help you prepare for staged exams, earn CME cost-free, and stay up to date.



One registration for the ANESTHESIOLOGY® annual meeting any time during your membership term - the biggest networking and learning opportunity of the year.



One registration for ASA® ADVANCE: The Anesthesiology Business Event any time during your membership term - ideal for growing business and leadership skills.



Delivery of targeted clinical, career, personal finance, and wellness resources just as you need them, based on your evolving focus and needs.

### Already enrolled in the Early-Career Membership Program?



Max out your member perks! Access extensive CME included in your Early-Career Education Package to help refresh your knowledge and hone your clinical skills. Don't forget, you also receive one free registration for ANESTHESIOLOGY® and ASA® ADVANCE: The Anesthesiology Business Event during your first three years in practice. Click here to view: <https://education.asahq.org/totara/dashboard/index.php>

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## What We Do

*Meet or exceed MGMA averages in all key performance indicators*

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## Who We Are

### Experienced Coders

- 17+ years combined experience in coding
- CPC certified through AAPC
- Certified Anesthesia and Pain Management Coders (CANPC) through AAPC

### Expert Insurance Follow-up

- 50+ years combined experience in insurance follow-up and billing
- First billing company in Virginia to identify core issues in insurance claims processing multiple years in a row

### Exceptional Customer Service

- Each company will have a personal representative from BRBS that will set up and handle your accounts
- Our staff is located in Roanoke, VA, and you will always speak to someone in person when you call