

# Value of ALAO Membership



*“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing....” - Edmund Burke*

Dear friends:  
Monumental changes are occurring in medicine including our profession. At the federal level the debate of reimbursement versus controlling health care costs continues. At the state level, continued encroachment by non MD providers such as optometrists has the potential to create a 2nd tier health care system that puts our patients at risk. We cannot sit idly by or “throw in the towel”. The Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology working in close concert with the Medical Association of Alabama and the American Academy of Ophthalmology are diligently cooperating to emphasize quality eye care led by qualified ophthalmologists. We are achieving victories but must have a unified response in these ongoing challenges.  
That is why we cannot do this alone and need you to be involved. Being a member of the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology gives you an important venue and voice to be heard. Additionally, involvement in our state organization provides opportunities of leadership. Our close relationship with the AAO gives a larger part at the national level as well. Coordination with MASA at the state level allows us the opportunities to interact with colleagues in other specialties as well.  
I encourage you to join the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology. The officers and board of directors volunteer tirelessly on the membership’s behalf. Together we will prevail in ensuring that quality eye care will always be led by eye M.D.’s.

Ron Braswell, M.D., ALAO President

Success in advocating for the profession and for patients in any state jurisdiction cannot be achieved by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) acting alone. Success requires critical local knowledge of key state issues, politics, and personal relationships. Only the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology (ALAO) can leverage that knowledge and work to best represent you in Alabama. So when leaders of ALAO or the AAO call asking for your support, remember the importance of everything from scope of practice to regional carrier coverage determinations--and become an active member of the ALAO.

In addition to providing support on advocacy issues, ALAO also offers excellent continuing medical education and networking opportunities. ALAO collaborates with other state ophthalmology societies in the region to present an outstanding annual meeting, the SouthEast Eye Meeting, held each year in Destin, Florida. The national AAO is only as strong as its weakest link in the state societies. Please continue to support ALAO as a strong and thriving state ophthalmology society!

The AAO collaborates with state ophthalmology societies including the ALAO on a wide range of issues and programs, from educating patients about the differences in eye care providers via the EyeSmart program, to practice management and coding education via the CODEquest program, to leadership development of Eye M.D.s via the Leadership Development Program, to public service activities via EyeCare America and professional social media opportunities such as the EyeWiki and the online community. Please join your colleagues in supporting both your national organization and your state society.

David W. Parke, II, M.D., AAO CEO and Executive Vice-President



Mike Merrill, Esq.  
Executive Director, ALAO  
2012 Seaton Park/Sturbridge Commons  
Montgomery, AL 36116  
Tel: 334-279-9755 / Cell: 334-391-1967 / Fax: 334-277-2035  
E-mail: [jmikemerrill@gmail.com](mailto:jmikemerrill@gmail.com)



# Membership in ALAO: What’s in it for Me?



Join ALAO Today!  
Contact Mike Merrill: [jmikemerrill@gmail.com](mailto:jmikemerrill@gmail.com) | 334.279.9755

## MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITIES/BENEFITS - ALABAMA ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

### Governance:

The Academy convenes meetings of the Board of Directors throughout the year at pre-determined times. The Academy holds at least one General Business Meeting each year to elect leadership and give the general membership an opportunity to meet with the Academy's leadership and voice their opinions.

### Staff:

The Academy's Executive Director is a licensed attorney in both Alabama and Florida. The Academy's Executive Director is a licensed lobbyist with the Alabama Legislature. The Academy's Executive Director attends state and national meetings annually related to promoting the interests of ophthalmic medicine.

### Communicating with Members:

The Academy publishes a Newsletter at least twice a year with updates and information regarding the practice of ophthalmic medicine. The Academy maintains a website at [www.alabamaeyedoctors.com](http://www.alabamaeyedoctors.com). The Academy maintains a Facebook page to promote discourse among ALAO members.

### Education:

The Academy holds at least one Annual Meeting to provide education and CME credits for: (1) ophthalmologists, (2) technicians, (3) administrators, and (4) RN's. Academy members receive a discounted rate for Annual Meeting registration fees.

### Public Service and Community Outreach Activities:

EyeCare Alabama is the Academy's 501 (c) (3) community outreach program. Since its inception in 2004, EyeCare Alabama has provided free eye exams (with follow-up treatment when necessary), free adult eye education, and free eye glasses to over 4500 disadvantaged Alabamians at no cost to the patients. A conservative estimate of these services is over One-Million Dollars in free eye care.

### Free Coding Services:

The Academy provides unlimited coding services to its members at no cost.

### Governmental Affairs:

The Academy constantly monitors political happenings and developments at the local, state, and national levels. Academy personnel visit Washington at least once a year to visit personally with their U.S. Representatives and Senators. The Academy maintains a visible presence in the Alabama Legislature, in addition to working with outside lobbyists and MASA Governmental Affairs personnel. ALAO and the AAO work jointly to provide PAC monies at the state and federal levels to "pro-medicine" candidates. The Academy works with the AAO to develop a State and Federal Legislator Advocacy Plan, including a Key Contact Program wherein an ophthalmologist contact representing the Academy is assigned to a specific state or federal elected official.

"I firmly believe that a clear message be delivered from the entire ophthalmic community with regards to patient care, educational activities, and political issues. Ophthalmologists throughout Alabama have many common goals which are best achieved through a vibrant state academy. I have worked diligently to have our UAB residents exposed to the great work that the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology does for the practice of ophthalmic medicine."  
Lanning B. Kline, M.D., - Professor and Chairman, UAB Dept. of Ophthalmology, Birmingham, Alabama

"I have been in Dothan for 25 years. In my early years, I had very little interaction with the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology. It seemed to be a burden to: (1) hear from them, (2) go to meetings, (3) pay dues. My "rude awakening" came when state legislation was passed allowing optometrists to prescribe medications. About 15 years ago, I became active in the State Academy. Since that time, and with ALAO members working together, ophthalmology has grown considerably stronger with a State Academy that is well connected politically. We are all in this together to protect our profession. Please join us."  
Jimmy Carter, M.D., - Dothan, Alabama

"In my final year of ophthalmology residency at UAB, I am fortunate to be a "resident-member" of the ALAO Board of Directors. I have been most impressed by the ALAO in its: (1) commitment to advocacy for our patients and our profession, and (2) their emphasis on education as a way to provide the best patient care. The key to maintaining both of these is a strong and active State Academy with participation by ALL Alabama ophthalmologists. I understand the importance of introducing young ophthalmologists to the "political arena." The future of ophthalmology is with our younger physicians. ALAO is doing a great job of informing and assisting us as we move forward."  
Lindsay Rhodes, M.D. - UAB Ophthalmology Resident  
Birmingham, Alabama

"Every person owes a part of his time and money to the business or industry in which he or she is engaged. No one has a moral right to withhold their support from an organization that is striving to improve conditions within their sphere."  
- President Teddy Roosevelt, 1908