



# **SGRC REGIONAL ADVOCACY MEETING MIDWESTERN**

## **SGRC Midwestern Regional Advocacy Meeting Speaker Bios**

### **Speakers**

#### **Rep. Carl Newton, O.D. (R-58)**

Rep. Newton has been a longtime advocate and true difference-maker for optometry in the state of Oklahoma. The relationships he has built during his tenure and the knowledge he possesses make it possible for the state's legislative initiatives to be successful.

As a member of the state House of Representatives, he recently authored, passed and served as chief negotiator for numerous pieces of legislation including the Walmart compromise bill following the Oklahoma Association of Optometric Physicians successful ballot proposal campaign; H.B. 3862, which allowed for the dispensing of drugs by optometrists; H.B. 2680, to clarify language to allow for the dispensing of medications to treat ocular abnormalities; and H.B. 3823, to eliminate a statutory requirement for optometrists to pass a health department course in order to assist in school vision screenings. He also was a key advocate for the allocation of \$15 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to the Northeastern State School of Optometry to assist in the building of a new school facility

Rep. Newton has served in the state House since 2016, representing the people of the 58th House district. He is a recently retired doctor of optometry, having served patients in and around his hometown of Cherokee.

#### **Todd Fleischer**

Todd Fleischer is the executive director of the Kansas Optometric Association (KOA) and has served in this role for the past six years. Fleischer leads the legislative efforts for the KOA in Topeka and has successfully enacted multiple pieces of legislation over past few years to benefit local doctors of optometry while

also defending against bills that would have undermined the doctor-patient relationship.

He has been a member of the AOA's State Government Relations Committee for two years and, in total, has tirelessly advocated for the optometric profession with the KOA for the past 27 years.

**Jeff Michaels, O.D.**

Dr. Michaels, the AOA's 2022 Optometrist of the Year, has been in the role of Virginia Optometric Association (VOA) Legislative Committee co-chair for many years, including during the planning and successful passage of its laser scope bill earlier this year. His extensive legislative experience includes not only galvanizing a statewide keyperson network, but also testifying in the Virginia state house and senate as an expert witness.

Dr. Michaels is a past president of the VOA, is co-owner of a five-doctor practice in Richmond, Virginia, and is a member of the AOA's State Government Relations Committee.

**Matt Jones, O.D.**

Dr. Jones has been a key figure in the multiple successes Arkansas has seen over the past few years, both in the legislature and the courts. He helped to coordinate the efforts and lead the charge in Little Rock during the 2019 passage of the state's scope bill, and he helped drive the defense of this law in 2020 in both the courts and at the ballot box simultaneously.

Dr. Jones has been a member of the AOA's State Government Relations Committee for the past year as well.

**Paul Barney, O.D.**

Dr. Barney spearheaded efforts in Alaska in 2017, which ultimately saw the enactment of the nation's only true board authority scope legislation. Since that time, he has individually performed over 700 YAG laser surgical procedures.

Dr. Barney has successfully served on the AOA's State Government Relations Committee for four years and was most recently elected to the AOA's Board of Trustees at Optometry's Meeting® in Chicago earlier this year.

He worked this legislation for three straight sessions before ultimately passing the bill.

**David Cockrell, O.D.**

Dr. Cockrell is one of the most prolific advocates in the history of the optometric profession. He worked tirelessly in his home state of Oklahoma—which became the first state to enact advanced scope of practice legislation—and has actively supported state scope efforts across the country.

Dr. Cockrell is the current chair of the Healthcare Alliance for Patient Safety and immediate past AOA Advocacy Committee chair, as well as AOA past president.

**Johndra McNeely, O.D.**

Dr. McNeely serves as South Carolina’s legislative chair and spearheaded the effort to enact patient safety standards related to mobile clinics during the 2022 session. She also played a critical role in enacting legislation, which helped to set national standards for patient safeguards, related to online vision tests in 2016.

Dr. McNeely currently serves as chair of the AOA’s State Government Relations Committee.

**Amy Wickliffe**

Amy Wickliffe is a partner at the firm McCarthy Strategic Solutions based out of Frankfort, Kentucky, bringing more than 15 years of political and lobby expertise to this role. Wickliffe’s firm has represented the Kentucky Optometric Association (KOA) for nearly two decades, and she played a pivotal role in helping to secure passage of the KOA’s advanced scope legislation in 2011.

As a lobbyist, she advocates for other client issues including pharmaceuticals, real estate, workers’ compensation, and crime victims’ rights. In 2018, she received an Excellence in Advocacy award from Professional Women in Advocacy, recognizing her work on behalf of Marsy’s Law for Kentucky. In 2019, she was named one of the *Kentucky Gazette*’s Notable Women in Kentucky Politics and Government.

