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HIMSS Boosts Capitol Hill Effort

By Diana Manos, Senior Editor 07/01/08 HIMSS 0708

WASHINGTON – Attendance for the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society’s annual advocacy day held on June 11 was up 30 percent this year, according to David Roberts, HIMSS vice president for government relations.

A total of 200 attendees from 41 states attended the advocacy event, held in conjunction with National Health IT Week.

HIMSS members went to Capitol Hill in an effort to persuade lawmakers to pass a healthcare IT bill.

Roberts attributed the increased attendance in part to more interest from HIMSS state chapters that have been promoting advocacy all year. The Pennsylvania Chapter even rented a bus this year to transport its members to national advocacy day, he said.

HIMSS held its annual summit June 9-10 this year to coincide with advocacy day in Washington. Susan Farrell, HIMSS vice president of education and organizer of the event, said the most popular sessions of this year’s summit were those related to CIO and CEO relationships, or the C-Suite. The summit previously has had a policy focus, she said. This year, among other offerings, HIMSS tried to address the support key leaders need when championing healthcare IT advancement.

Justin Barnes, incoming chairman of HIMSS Electronic Health Record Vendors’ Association and vice president of government affairs at Greenway Medical Technologies, said the advocacy effort showed gains over past years. Congress and staffers seemed to be well versed in healthcare IT, he added.

“All the education is truly starting to penetrate through the halls of Congress,” Barnes said. “You can clearly see that healthcare IT is at the top of the minds of Congress.”

According to Barnes, there are more than 100 bills on the books for consideration that are healthcare IT related.