

## **As Summer Heats Up, So Can Advocacy Efforts**

**Tom Grady, Director of Advocacy & Public Affairs**

Days are getting warmer, elected officials are in the process of finalizing the next state budget, and people are making plans for summer vacations. This is time for advocates to take some time off too, right? Wrong.

Summer is an opportunity for advocates to meet with their elected officials to speak about issues that are of concern to them. True, lawmakers and staff may be taking time off. But, they are likely less harried and more willing to take the time to meet with more constituents and listen to their concerns – without extensive distractions. To learn who your federal and state elected officials are, visit <http://bianj.org/contact-your-legislators> and follow the instructions.

“It is important to educate elected officials about issues pertaining to brain injury on a regular basis,” says John Tiene, Chairperson for the Board of Trustees for the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey. “Advocates need to be proactive in contacting their elected officials, meet with them, and state their concerns,” he added. “This needs to be done if advocates want to effect change for themselves and the broader brain injury community.”

“Keeping elected officials informed regularly enables them to become familiar with the broad range of brain injury issues,” says Barbara Geiger-Parker, President & CEO of the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey. “When elected officials are educated about brain injury issues, they can make informed decisions. Advocates play a critical role in working to ensure that decisions have a positive impact on the brain injury community.”

Advocates associated with the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey can remain involved with the advocacy efforts of the Association through its advocacy and public affairs committee or through the Council for the Head Injured Community and the Legislative Network. To learn more about the advocacy services at the Association, visit <http://bianj.org/advocacy>

Wally Kyle, chair of the Association’s Advocacy & Public Affairs Committee, says that the Association is in the process of developing a grassroots advocacy catalog. “The purpose of this catalog is to know which government officials – both elected and appointed – our associates have connections to.” He added, “It is imperative that we have this information so that we can utilize our advocates as a bridge to those who can advance our agenda.” (If you have any such connection(s), please contact Tom Grady, Director of Advocacy & Public Affairs at 732-745-0200 or at [tgrady@bianj.org](mailto:tgrady@bianj.org) )

Remember, as the Summer season heats up so should your efforts to meet with your elected officials in the New Jersey State Legislature and the United States Congress. Contact the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey for support.

### **Sidebar**

- Governor Corzine, on April 15, 2009, signs "Kyleigh's law" which requires holders of special learner's permits, examination permits, and provisional driver's licenses to display certain decals.
- On April 15, 2009, Governor Corzine signs legislation that revises certain restrictions on permit holders and provisional driver's licensees and renames provisional license "probationary."
- Legislation declaring May as Brain Tumor Awareness Month is signed into law on April 15, 2009.
- General Assembly passes legislation (A3067) prohibiting plea agreements for motor vehicle violations by drivers subject to the Graduated Driver Licensing law on March 5, 2009.
- On March 5, 2009, General Assembly passes legislation (A3068) expanding requirements for special learner's and examination permits.