

SUMMER 2026
ASCLS - MT

NEWSLETTER



ASCLS-MT Letter from the President

By Anne Tate, ASCLS-MT President

The Laboratory: The Center of Care - Visibility and Value

As we left the ASCLS Montana Spring Meeting at Fairmont Hot Springs (May 7–9), there was a shared sense of energy, accomplishment, and collegiality. The meeting delivered on its goals—education, networking, and celebration of our profession—and most importantly, it reinforced a central truth: we are finding and strengthening our collective voice. This year's program was intentionally forward-looking, centered on laboratory visibility and value—two themes that increasingly define our role in healthcare. Across every session, the message was consistent: the clinical laboratory is not peripheral to care. It is central to it.

We were honored to hear from ASCLS National President Kyle Riding, who provided a foundational and practical overview of Artificial Intelligence and its implications for laboratory medicine. The Montana Hospital Association's discussion of the Rural Health Transformation Fund (RHTF) highlighted opportunities for laboratories to help shape sustainable rural healthcare delivery models. Additional sessions challenged us to think differently about the laboratory enterprise—viewing it not only as a cost center, but also as a potential revenue center when capacity is strategically leveraged. The idea of managing the laboratory with a CEO mindset, regardless of role, reinforced that leadership is expected at every level. We also explored advances in urine, hematology, DNA and genetic testing, along with regulatory updates including the proposed RESULT Act, which may significantly influence future reimbursement structures. From these discussions, three strategic imperatives stand out:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Visibility

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the clinical laboratory has gained long-overdue recognition for its essential role in diagnosis, treatment, and disease prevention. As diagnostics become more complex, we must continue to actively communicate the depth, rigor, and scientific expertise behind laboratory medicine.

Value

The laboratory drives the majority of clinical decisions, and with that comes responsibility to demonstrate clear value. This means delivering accurate, timely results while maintaining quality, efficiency, and adaptability. Laboratory stewardship ensuring the right test, at the right time, for the right patient—is central to sustaining both clinical and operational excellence.

Voice

Our collective voice determines our future. Workforce sustainability, reimbursement reform, and regulatory change will all shape our profession. If we are not engaged, decisions will still be made but without our perspective. ASCLS provides the platform to ensure laboratorians are present, engaged, and influential in those decisions. ASCLS Montana continues to move forward with purpose and momentum. This spring meeting reflected who we are and what we stand for. The clinical laboratory is not behind the scenes of healthcare—it is at the center of care.

Anne Tate, President, ASCLS-MT





Regulatory Update/MT PAC

Title: PAMA Reporting, the RESULTS Act, and New Legislation for LDTs

The clinical laboratory industry is facing some of the most consequential legislative and regulatory developments in over a decade—changes that may significantly impact laboratory sustainability, reimbursement, and the future of diagnostic testing.

Below is a summary of the latest updates.

PAMA Reporting

Under the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) of 2014, all applicable laboratories are required to report private payer data for approximately 800 commonly ordered laboratory tests to CMS. This data is used to recalibrate the Medicare Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule (CLFS).

The current reporting period runs May 1 through July 31, 2026. The data submitted will directly influence Medicare reimbursement rates for the next three-year CLFS cycle.

Given the broad impact of this reporting, accuracy and participation are critical, as these rates will affect laboratory reimbursement nationwide.

The RESULTS Act

The RESULTS Act is a bipartisan bill introduced in September 2025 as a proposed replacement for PAMA. It seeks to address longstanding concerns regarding the CLFS data collection and pricing methodology.

Key issues the bill aims to resolve include:

Limited data representation (historically drawn from a small percentage of eligible laboratories)

Methodology concerns that have led to significant downward pressure on reimbursement rates

Potential fee schedule reductions of up to 15% without a long-term cap beyond 2029

If PAMA is not reformed or replaced, laboratories may continue to face substantial reductions in Medicare reimbursement across a wide range of tests.

Take Action

Laboratory professionals are encouraged to contact their Congressional representatives. A pre-drafted message is available through the STOP LAB CUTS website and can be sent in just a few minutes.

Hot Off the Press: H.R. 8890 – The Enhanced CLIA Act

On May 19, 2026, Representative Neal Dunn (Florida) introduced H.R. 8890, the Enhanced CLIA Act, aimed at modernizing oversight of Laboratory Developed Tests (LDTs). The bill seeks to establish a clearer regulatory framework for LDTs under CLIA rather than FDA oversight.

ASCLS is currently reviewing the legislation and will provide guidance to members once its analysis is complete.

Key provisions of the Enhanced CLIA Act include:

Establishing a public LDT database containing performance specifications, validation data, and other key test information

Reaffirming CMS oversight of LDTs, including novel analyses of digital laboratory data (such as genomic reanalysis of previously sequenced samples)

Allowing voluntary third-party validation of LDT analytical and clinical performance using existing review structures

Creating centralized error reporting mechanisms and strengthening CMS oversight when credible concerns arise regarding test validity

Closing Perspective

Together, these legislative efforts underscore a rapidly evolving regulatory environment for clinical laboratories. Active engagement from laboratory professionals will be essential to ensure that policy decisions reflect the realities of patient care, operational constraints, and the value laboratories provide to the healthcare system.

ST. LOUIS – 2026

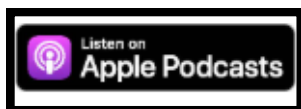
JOINT ANNUAL MEETING

JAM



**Do you connect
with us through
ASCLS Connect
Community?**

**Do you connect with us on our
website? www.ascls-mt.org**



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Jerrica Bursik Takes Laboratory Medicine to Madagascar



ASCLS Montana member, Jerrica Bursik is taking her laboratory expertise across the globe as a volunteer aboard the Africa Mercy, a hospital ship operated by Mercy Ships in Tomasina, Madagascar.

Jerrica will spend three months serving as a laboratory generalist, performing essential pre-operative testing including CBCs, chemistry panels, blood typing, and microbiology procedures to support surgical patients aboard the ship.

In Madagascar, where many communities have limited access to healthcare services, the Africa Mercy delivers life-changing surgical and medical care directly to underserved populations. Founded in 1978, Mercy Ships uses hospital ships staffed by volunteer healthcare professionals to provide surgical care and strengthen healthcare systems through education and training.

Globally, an estimated 5 billion people lack access to safe and affordable surgical care. Jerrica's service highlights the important role medical laboratory professionals play in patient care around the world and demonstrates how laboratorians can make a meaningful impact far beyond the traditional laboratory setting.

ASCLS Montana applauds Jerrica for representing our profession with compassion, dedication, and purpose. We look forward to hearing more about her experience when she returns home.



Growing Leaders, Strengthening Our Profession

Region VIII Leadership Academy

For ASCLS members who have ever considered stepping into a larger role, the Region VIII Leadership Academy offers a meaningful way to grow. More than just a training program, it is an opportunity to build confidence, connect with colleagues across the region, and gain practical experience that prepares participants for leadership within ASCLS and beyond.

Through mentorship, guided learning, and hands-on project work, participants gain practical skills they can use in their state societies, workplaces, and professional communities.

At its core, R8LA helps prepare members to serve and lead with confidence. Programs like R8LA matter because they build confidence, broaden professional networks, and give participants a stronger understanding of ASCLS at the state, regional, and national levels—while sending them back to their home states ready to share ideas and encourage others.

What Makes R8LA Unique?

What sets the academy apart is its balance of personal connection and practical experience. The program begins with an in-person kickoff that brings together participants from across Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. From the very beginning, members build relationships, collaborate with peers, and begin shaping projects that will benefit Region VIII.

The learning continues throughout the year through virtual sessions focused on communication, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and project planning. Rather than concentrating only on theory, the academy gives participants tools they can apply right away in both their professional and volunteer roles.

A key part of the experience is the group leadership project, which allows participants to work together on an initiative that benefits the region. By the end of the program, members have not only expanded their leadership skills but have also gained experience presenting their ideas at state and regional meetings.





Leadership in Action



Region VIII Leadership Academy participants during kickoff activities, connecting and launching their leadership journey.



Celebrating Our Graduates

This year's cohort recently shared its Scientific Assemblies project at the ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting and is preparing to present again at the Region VIII Council Meeting during JAM—an example of how the academy helps participants turn learning into action.

Congratulations to our upcoming R8LA graduates:

Maria Rodriguez (Montana)

Shannon Callaghan-Gardner (Montana)

Mandie Smith (Montana)

Chere` Clawson (Utah)

These members reflect the service and commitment that continue to move our profession forward, and we look forward to seeing what they do next.



APPLY NOW



How to Apply

Applications are open to current ASCLS members in Region VIII and may be submitted either by self-nomination or by nomination from a colleague or supervisor. The application deadline for the 2026 cycle is August 31, 2026.

Members interested in applying should watch for official announcements from ASCLS Region VIII or ASCLS-MT Connect Communities, or contact the R8LA coordinator for application materials and submission instructions. a_k_ahlgren@msn.com



Important Dates

August 31, 2026: Application deadline

September 10–13, 2026: Leadership Academy Class of 2026–2027 convenes for Opening Days in Garden City, Utah

October 12, 2026: Labvocacy Symposium (virtual attendance)

Saturdays, October–March, 9:00–11:00 a.m.: Zoom conference calls

Spring 2027: State spring conferences (location and dates determined by each state)

2027 Joint Annual Meeting: In-person attendance preferred; date and location to be announced

For many participants, the academy becomes one of the most meaningful leadership experiences in their ASCLS journey, creating relationships and lessons that last well beyond the program itself. Whether you are early in your career or already serving in leadership, the Region VIII Leadership Academy offers a chance to learn, connect, and grow. If leadership development is on your mind, this may be the right time to take that next step.

Apply Now!



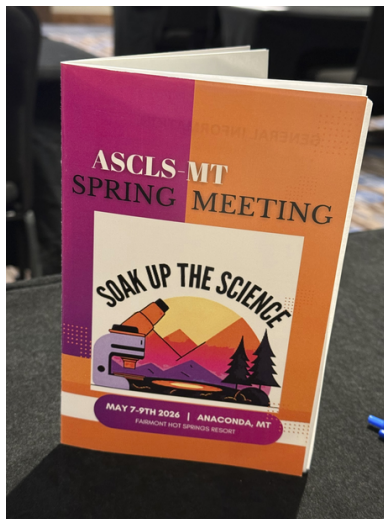
ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting 2026



“The strength of ASCLS Montana is not just in its leadership, but in the active participation of its members”



Member of the Year
President Anne Tate



-Educate, encourage and participate -ASCLS Montana Community



Keys to the Future Award
Daelyn Myers and Kacie Toennis



Longevity Award - 35 Years
Joni Gilstrap
Suzie Zanto



Omicron Sigma Award

Abbey Wichman, Cara Bushmaker, Kacie Toennis, Holly Weinberg, Shannon Gardner, Jerrica Bursik, Maria Rodriguez, Tori Rensink, Zanna Hartrich
Daelyn Meyers