Illinois State Assembly – Summer 2026 Newsletter

Celebrating 25 Years of Service, Leadership, and Statewide Advocacy

A Message to Our Members

This summer marks a milestone for the Illinois State Assembly as we celebrate **25 years of service** to the profession. Thank you to every practitioner, educator, student, and healthcare partner who has helped build our legacy and strengthen our statewide community.

🏆 Illinois Receives the 2025 AST State Leadership Award

Illinois was honored with the **2025 State Assembly Leadership Achievement Award** at the AST National Conference in Seattle. Receiving this recognition during our 25-year anniversary made the achievement even more meaningful.

🌟 AST National Conference Highlights

Keynote: Pike Place Fish Market – The Flying Fishmongers High-energy teamwork and communication insights

National Updates

- 115,000+ surgical technologists nationwide
- 96,000+ CST/CSFA AST members

Illinois at the AST National Conference – Full Report

This year's AST National Conference in Seattle was extraordinary, and Illinois was proudly and powerfully represented. During our 25-year anniversary, Illinois received the **2025 State Assembly Leadership Achievement Award**, marking a full-circle moment since our state last earned this honor years ago in New Orleans.

There were **over 16 Illinois State Assembly members attending the 2026 National conference**. Their attendance strengthened our visibility and impact through professionalism, engagement, and enthusiasm.

National Delegate Recognition

Illinois was proudly represented at the national level by:

- **Tanisha Bonner, MS, CST, CSFA · Adele Alvarez, CST · Sonya Tyson, MS, CST, FAST**

These delegates represented Illinois with professionalism, leadership, and pride.

We also proudly recognize **Brooke Oliver**, who serves on the **AST National Board of Directors**, representing Illinois at the highest level of national governance with dedication and excellence.

Several presentations were especially meaningful:

- **Mona Bourbonnais, CST, FAST** delivered *Beyond the Back Table*, emphasizing the national shift toward sustainable workforce development through accredited education and structured training pathways. Her message aligned directly with Illinois' momentum, especially now that our state has **federally approved Surgical Technology apprenticeship programs.** This milestone strengthens partnerships with healthcare facilities—including OSF HealthCare—which expanse has offered opportunities for students and employers across Illinois.
- **Nicole Presa, CST, QHP-CS**, a licensed therapist and nationally recognized advocate for mental-health support in the OR, presented *Beyond Technique*. Her session offered evidence-based tools for emotional regulation, communication, and stress management—skills essential for today's surgical teams. Nicole's work is transforming how surgical technologists navigate high-pressure environments, and her leadership complements Illinois' efforts by supporting practitioner well-being, resilience, and long-term retention.
- **Alyssa Ellis, CST, CFSA**, an internationally recognized preceptor educator and social media voice in OR culture, shared powerful strategies for building supportive, high-functioning surgical teams. As a global influencer in mentorship and professional development, Alyssa's insights reinforce the importance of structured onboarding—an area where Illinois' **Surgical Technologists** are already making a statewide impact by improving consistency, strengthening hospital partnerships, and elevating the learning experience for new practitioners.
- The keynote from the Pike Place Fish Market Flying Fishmongers brought unmatched energy, humor, and heart to the conference. Their message about

teamwork, communication, and stepping in for one another felt instantly familiar to anyone who's ever worked in an OR.
- One of the most memorable moments came from **Jaison Scott**, the owner of Pike Place Fish Market, who shared his story as the "banana box baby." Raised by a hardworking single mother, his journey from humble beginnings to leading a world-famous business deeply resonated with the audience — especially those who know what it means to grow up watching a parent work tirelessly to build a better life.

Executive Officer **Jodi Licalzi** also shared inspiring national updates:

- 115,000+ surgical technologists nationwide
- 96,000+ CST/CSFA AST members

The growth of our profession is remarkable and encouraging. 🏅

Legislator of the Year: Representative Barbara Hernandez

Honored for her leadership and sponsorship of HB 1598, advancing protections and opportunities for surgical technologists statewide.

Member Spotlight: Janice Grewatz, MS.Ed, CSPDT, CSFA, CST, FAST

Congratulations to Janice for being named the **2026 ICC/TA Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Member** at Parkland College.

Workforce Development

- OSF HealthCare signed a Surgical Technology Apprenticeship agreement.
- Illinois Central College launched a federally established apprenticeship program.

🎓 Program Excellence

John A. Logan College earned national accreditation under the leadership of **Jennifer Jordan, BS, CST, FAST**.

Student Engagement

Students supported the Fall Workshop by organizing the meeting area, preparing merchandise tables, and guiding attendees—demonstrating professionalism and teamwork.

HOSA & Student Outreach

The Illinois State Assembly continues to support national objectives through the partnership between AST and HOSA–Future Health Professionals. ISA leadership has been in ongoing conversations with the **Executive Director of Illinois HOSA**, strengthening connections between the international organization and local communities.

These efforts aim to increase awareness of Surgical Technology as a career pathway and introduce high-school and grade-school students to the profession early. Through HOSA chapter engagement and campus visits, ISA is helping build a sustainable pipeline of future surgical technologists.

Community Outreach: Share Your Soles & ICC Food Drive

During the Fall 2025 Meeting at Malcolm X College, Co-Chairs **Bridget Hoffenkamp** and **Melissa Jensen** led a statewide shoe drive supporting **Share Your Soles**, collecting men's, women's, and children's footwear for families in need.

In addition, **Bridget Hoffenkamp** organized a **Food Drive for Illinois Central College students**, helping support food-insecure learners and ensuring they had access to essential items during the academic year. Her leadership and compassion strengthened community support for ICC students and demonstrated the heart of the Illinois State Assembly.

🏛️ Legislative Engagement Strengthens Our Future

Illinois lawmakers across the state visited accredited surgical technology programs to learn firsthand about the profession and support the **Operating Room Patient Safety Act.**

Statewide Legislative Visits

Rep. Nicole La Ha Rep.

Anne Stava-Murray

Sen. Rachel Ventura

Rep. Sharon Chung

Sen. David Koehler

Rep. Kelly Cassidy

Rep. Michael Crawford

Rep. Lindsey LaPointe

Sen. Sally Turner

Chief Sponsors of the Senate Bill

Senator Adriane Johnson – Lead Chief Sponsor

Senator Chapin Rose – Chief Co-Sponsor

Senator Mike Simmons – Chief Co-Sponsor

Campus Engagement Across Illinois

Legislators toured programs at:

- **Rasmussen University** – hosted by **Program Director Jill Teodoro, M.Ed., CST**
- Illinois Central College
- Malcolm X College
- Harper College
- Richland Community College

These visits strengthened legislative understanding of accredited education and contributed to bipartisan support for the Operating Room Patient Safety Act.

U.S. National Note

U.S. Representative **Darin LaHood** visited Illinois Central College's Health Careers Department July 9, 2026 and observed SURTK students performing a simulated thoracotomy—highlighting the skill and professionalism of Illinois students.

Upcoming Events

Fall 2026 Meeting – Marion, Illinois Date to be announced soon.

Thank You for 25 Years of Service

Your dedication, advocacy, and professionalism have built 25 years of excellence. This anniversary is yours. This leadership award is yours. Our momentum belongs to all of us—and the future is bright.