



## **ISA NEWSLETTER**

**Illinois State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists Issue: July 2025 – Honoring the Legacy, Transforming Tomorrow**

### **March 2025 Annual Meeting, Elections & Seminar**

On **March 15, 2025**, ISA hosted its Annual Business Meeting and CE Seminar at **Illinois Central College – Peoria Campus**. The day featured expert presentations, legislative strategy, and the election of new leadership.

#### [ISA March Meeting 2025](#)

#### **Presenters Included:**

- Dr. Evans – Hand and Plastic Surgery
- Dr. Ryan T. Funk – Surgical Management of Sleep Apnea
- Dr. Luetkemeyer – What's New in Orthopedics
- Dr. Plunkett – Pediatric Heart Surgery
- Dr. Jacob Hopping – Surgical Mission Trip Opportunities
- Dr. Anderson – Robotic Esophagectomy
- Dr. Rammos – The Art of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery
- Legislative update by **Margaret Vaughn**, ISA Consultant

 **CE Credit:** 7 AST-approved CEUs

#### **2025 ISA Elections Results**

- President: **Sonya Conton, MS, BA, CST, FAST**
- Vice President: **Melissa Jensen, AAS, CST**
- Board of Directors:
- **Bridget Hoffenkamp, BSBH, CST**
- **Regina Barajas, AAS, CST**

- **Dr. Natan Mendes, MBA, CST**

“This meeting set the tone for a year of action. From education to legislation, we’re moving forward with purpose.” — *Sonya Conton, CST, FAST*

## **HB 1598 Legislative Update**

On **April 10, 2025**, the Illinois House passed **HB 1598 – The Operating Room Safety Act** by a vote of **73–35**. The bill now moves to the Senate.

### **Key Provisions**

- Requires accredited education and national certification for surgical technologists hired after **January 1, 2027**
- Promotes patient safety and professional standards statewide

### **Supporting Organizations**

- Illinois State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists
- Illinois Nurses Association (INA)
- Illinois AFL-CIO
- Illinois Community College Presidents’ Council
- Illinois Community College Trustees Association
- Illinois Coalition of Private Colleges & Universities
- Northwestern Medicine • Carle Health • OSF • Kirby • HSHS • Duly Health
- Springfield Memorial • Crawford Memorial • St. Mary’s Hospital
- Elgin CC • John A. Logan College • Lincoln Land CC
- CSTs, educators, and healthcare professionals statewide

“We’re raising awareness about HB 1598 and building accessibility into ISA leadership. The future is promising—and we’re shaping it together.” — *Dr. Natan Mendes, MBA, CST*

## **AST National Conference – Orlando 2025**

Held June 5–7, the AST Conference brought together nearly 2,000 professionals nationwide. Illinois was proudly represented by six delegates and 11 CSTs.

### **ISA Delegates**

- Chair: **Sonya Conton, CST, FAST**
- **Brooke Oliver, CST, FAST**
- **Rebecca Good, CST, CSFA, FAST**
- **Adele Alvarez, CST**
- **Tanisha Bonner, CST, CSFA**
- **Dr. Natan Mendes, CST**

 **Keynote: Dr. Kevin McCoy** honored CSTs with a musical tribute to his surgical tech, Chemise.

 **Brooke Oliver** was elected to the AST National Board of Directors with over 200 votes.

 Delegates honored the legacy of [Kevin Craycraft](#), 2021-2023 National Association of Surgical Technologists President.

 AST President Joseph Charleman reported:

- 62,000 CSTs nationwide
- 90,000 CSFAs certified practitioners
- 9,000 new CSTs added in 2024

 Upcoming AST Conferences:

Seattle 2026 • Milwaukee 2027 • Phoenix 2028  Bonus CEU Cruise – Tennessee, October 2026

 **Illinois CSTs in Attendance**

**We proudly recognize all Illinois professionals who attended AST 2025:**

Miles Campbell • Jill Teodoro • Fabian Slaton • Robin Szarmach • Jessica Karner • Sonya Conton, Tanisha Bonner • Kenzie Koch • Brooke Oliver • Michael Keller • Breanne Murchie • Victoria Johnson, Kristi Stavroplos • Becca Good • Debra Glazier • Nancy Reynolds • Nate Mendes


 [AST 2025 Photo Gallery – Illinois in Action](#)

 **Brooke's Election Celebration**

“To serve at the national level of an organization that shaped my career is deeply meaningful.”  
— *Brooke Oliver, M.Ed., CST, FAST*

 **Delegate Spotlights**

“We must protect our credentials—and above all else—our patients today and tomorrow.” —  
*Becca Good, CST, CFSA, FAST*

 “We’re raising awareness about HB 1598 and building accessibility into ISA leadership. The future is promising—and we’re shaping it together.” *Dr. Natan Mendes, MBA, CST*

 **Delegate Reflections – Voices That Lead Us**

*Illinois leadership in action at AST 2025 and beyond*

 **Sonya Conton, MS, BA, CST, FAST – ISA President & Delegate Chair**

✨ *TEAM-Together Everyone Achieves More* ✨

This year's Association of Surgical Technologists National Conference in Orlando was an incredible experience filled with inspiration, connection, and celebration of our profession.

We kicked off the conference with an unforgettable keynote by Dr. McCoy, a respected orthopedic surgeon and talented musician from Maryland. Dr. McCoy spoke passionately about the vital role surgical technologists play on the surgical team. He paid heartfelt tribute to his ortho tech, Chamice, sharing how her expertise in sterile technique and dedication in the trenches make his work possible. His message underscored the power of teamwork in the OR and the respect we've earned as professionals.

While at the conference, I also had the opportunity to meet with a SALC representative to discuss ways to enhance leadership support at the state level. Our goal is to make state management more accessible and responsive to you—the members of the Illinois State Assembly. These conversations are the foundation for future growth and stronger member engagement.

The proudest moment of the conference was watching **Brooke Oliver** be elected *unanimously* to the AST National Board of Directors. Her achievement is not just a personal milestone but a shared victory for all of us. Brooke's success reflects the commitment, passion, and hard work of the Illinois State Assembly. We are so proud of her leadership and all that she represents!

Illinois has made significant strides this year—including **our efforts to pass legislation that strengthens and recognizes the vital role of certified surgical technologists**. This progress is the result of collective action, persistence, and the belief that when we work together, we can achieve anything.

Thank you to the members and delegates of the Illinois State Assembly for allowing us to represent you at this amazing event. We are a **TEAM**—and *Together Everyone Achieves More*.

Sonya

 **Brooke Oliver, M.Ed., BS, CST, FAST, ACUE– ISA Delegate, Past ISA President & AST National Board of Director**

My time at the AST National Conference in Orlando was nothing short of incredible! It was a powerful week of collaboration, learning, and connection with fellow surgical technology professionals from across the country. I had the opportunity to meet new friends, share ideas with longtime colleagues, and be reminded of the strength and dedication within our community.

A true highlight was hearing keynote speaker Dr. McCoy, who delivered an inspiring message and expressed deep appreciation for Certified Surgical Technologists and the critical role we play in patient care and surgical outcomes. His words were both validating and motivating. I especially loved the song he wrote about his favorite CST, Chamice!

I am also incredibly honored and humbled to share that during this conference, I was elected to the AST Board of Directors.

To serve at the national level of an organization that has shaped my career and advocates so powerfully for our profession is both exciting and deeply meaningful. I'm grateful for the support, trust, and encouragement from my colleagues, mentors, and friends throughout this journey.

I look forward to working alongside my fellow board members to continue advancing surgical technology, supporting education and certification, and advocating for patient safety across the country.

### **Rebecca Good, CST, CSFA, FAST – ISA Delegate & ISA Board Secretary**

The 2025 National Conference in Orlando has been a rewarding experience for me. Our most exciting accomplishment was helping Brooke Oliver get elected to the National Board of AST. Many wonderful people to choose from, however, her passion for our profession was evident by all. She received over 200 votes out of the 240 voting members.

We took a moment to remember our most recent past president, Kevin Craycraft, and his career. We are saddened with his passing.

Our Keynote speaker ROCKED IT in all ways. An orthopedic surgeon from the East Coast, Dr. Kevin McCoy, took time to encourage us and the importance of our role. He and his band sang a song he wrote about his Surgical Technologist, Chemise. He received a standing ovation for this wonderful tribute to what we do.

President Joseph Charleman reported we have over 62,000 CST's and over 90K including CSFA's. In 2024 we saw an increase of 9,000 vs the 8,000 increase in 2023. So, the workforce shortage isn't as real as some want us to believe.

More than ever before, we've been encouraged to keep growing professionally. We must protect our credentials and above all else our patient today and tomorrow.

The next 3 conference sites were revealed. We are all thrilled to be headed to new areas and to expand our attendees. 2026 Seattle, 2027 Milwaukee, 2028 Phoenix. Networking with other states is always most beneficial. Tennessee is hosting a cruise for CEU's in October 2026. Everyone is invited.

Wisconsin is partnering closely with HOSA to educate middle school and high school students about the CST role.

Lots of new things for our future in this amazing profession. It was an honor to attend and represent the state of Illinois.

## **Natan Mendes, MD, MBA, CST – ISA Delegate & ISA Board of Director**

The Surgical Technology Conference, held in Orlando, Florida, brought together surgical technologists, healthcare professionals, educators, and industry leaders for a dynamic exchange of knowledge, innovation, and professional development.

Over the course of this multi-day event, attendees participated in hands-on workshops, educational sessions, and keynote presentations that focused on the latest advancements in surgical techniques, tools, and operating room practices. Additionally, the conference featured the traditional presentation of the AST officers who were up for election and re-election.

I was very fortunate to be elected as a member of the Board of Directors for the Illinois State Assembly of the AST this year, and I am honored to represent our state as a delegate. We were also fortunate to have Brooke Oliver, our past ISA president, elected as an official of the AST. Representing our members and supporting Brooke's election was one of the highlights of the conference.

Other highlights included discussions on robotic-assisted surgery, minimally invasive procedures, infection control, and the evolving roles within the surgical team. The conference also offered networking opportunities and featured an exhibit hall showcasing cutting-edge surgical instruments and technology from leading medical manufacturers.


Designed to support continuing education and certification, the event reinforced best practices in patient care, safety protocols, and team collaboration within the surgical environment. The Orlando location provided a vibrant backdrop for both professional engagement and relaxation, creating a memorable and impactful experience for all participants.


I would like to express my gratitude to the ISA members for their support and for allowing me to represent them during this exciting time in our profession. We are actively working to raise awareness among both the Illinois House of Representatives and State Senators regarding the Operating Room Safety Act - House Bill 1598, which recently passed the House and is now proceeding to the Illinois Senate for a vote.


## **Fall Symposium – Save the Date!**

### **Honoring the Legacy, Transforming Tomorrow**


 Malcolm X College – Chicago


 Saturday, October 11, 2025

 8:00 AM–2:00 PM (*International Museum of Surgical Science Museum IMSS visit to follow*)

 6 CEUs (pending AST approval)

 Expert speakers • Onsite Format

 Registration: Link coming soon to website

 Museum open until 5:00 PM

 Contacts:

- **Dr. Natan Mendes** – nmendes@ccc.edu | 312-850-7351
- **Sonya Conton** – sonya.conton@icc.edu | 309-690-7568

### **Get Involved**

- Mentor CST students
- Submit a story or witness slip
- Serve on a committee
- Advocate for legislation

Together, we're building a stronger future for **Surgical Technology in Illinois.**