

## CFO Spour Represents

LAWRENCEVILLE — A year ago, Lawrence County Memorial Hospital Chief Financial Officer Larry Spour was “overwhelmed” when he represented the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network at Rural Health Policy Institute.

Things were much smoother last week, when Spour was a part of the 17-member ICAHN delegation to attend the three-day event in Washington, D.C. In all, representatives from all 50 states were on hand at the 30th annual institute.

“I was much more prepared,” said Spour, who was joined by Chief Executive Officers, Chief Financial Officers and other administrators from ICAHN hospitals. “I knew what to expect. It wasn’t quite as overwhelming this time.”

The group attended the conference which included speakers from Rural Health Organizations, senators and representatives of Congress. Topics included discussions on prenatal and obstetric services, opioid treatment and prevention, physician/provider shortages, the economic impact of healthcare in rural America, opportunities and advantages of telemedicine, the financial challenges of the reduced payments for healthcare, and the challenges of providing emergency healthcare services in rural America.

The second day of the conference, Wednesday, was “Advocacy Day.” It gave attendees of the conference time to meet their congressional representatives to discuss the efforts of Congress as it relates to sustaining and enhancing the healthcare opportunities in rural America.

Spour and other ICAHN representatives met with Illinois Senator Richard Durbin and staff members for

Senator Tammy Duckworth. In addition, the members split up into smaller groups in an effort to meet with Congressional Representatives from the various districts. Spour's group met with Illinois 15th District Representative John Shimkus and Illinois 16th District Representative Adam Kinzinger.

"The members were able to provide information and answer questions from the representatives related to the challenges, successes and opportunities related to providing healthcare in the rural areas of the United States," Spour said. "Based on information shared during those four days, there is a concentrated effort on the sustainability of healthcare services in rural communities across the country."

Spour and his ICAHN partners shared with members of Congress data to support the success stories as well as some of the challenges of providing the entire spectrum of healthcare in the rural communities of the United States.

Advocating for rural hospitals was a primary focus for Spour and the ICAHN group. Spour notes that since 2010, 95 rural hospitals have closed their doors. One of those, he said, was in Streator, Illinois.

Among the major topics, according to Spour, were:

- Obstetrics and pre-natal care: "Not only women, but children," he said. "In rural communities that's more of a challenge than it was 15 years ago. A lot of hospitals no longer offer those services."

- Emergency Medical Technicians: "We've got to get people the best care, the quickest," Spour said. "A lot of EMT programs are stretched pretty thin, so that's a focus."

- America's drug problem: "Not just opioids, but drugs in general," he said. "Opioid bills are dragging other drugs along with it. It's a focus across the spectrum."

- The rural workforce: "The focus is on not just the healthcare workforce, but the workforce in general for rural areas," he said. "It's important to beef up the workforce, overall."

The Rural Health Policy Institute claimed to be successful a year ago, with record rural health safety net funding, landmark opioid legislation, critical regulatory reform and new, innovative rural health programs the result.

Spour and others beating the drum for rural health are hoping for more of the same.

"We've been able to provide data to help benefit the rural health community," he said. "We hope to continue to do that."