

Advancing the Profession

Questions and Answers About the FOA Budget and Proposed Dues Assessment

The FOA Board of Trustees has worked diligently to ensure the annual goals of the membership are maintained. We are happy to reiterate the enormous victory we achieved following the 2023 legislative session that produced an unprecedented VETO of SB 230; a priority bill of the Senate President that ultimately ensured that every optometrist in Florida maintained the right to keep their designation as a “doctor” and “physician.”

The FOA Board of Trustees is also committed to our 3–5-year goal of not only protecting the honorable profession of optometry but also to advance it. We have a strategy that will allow every optometrist in Florida the ability to practice at their highest level of education and training with our stated goal of attaining additional diagnostic and therapeutic treatment options for our patients within this timeframe.

The 2023 legislative session showed all of us how fragile our profession can be to the whims of certain legislators, but YOU showed resilience, understanding and a commitment to our strategy, and it worked.

Today, the FOA Board of Trustees needs each of you to continue your support of the Florida Optometric Association with a one-time dues assessment of \$350 per member. This decision did not come lightly as we all understand the financial sacrifice that each of you maintains through your membership to our association and your commitment to OD-EYEPAC.

To help answer your questions, here are some Questions and Answers:

Q: Why do we need a dues assessment?

A: To date, roughly 50% of our practicing optometrists are members of the FOA and only 15% of Florida ODs contribute to OD-EYEPAC. Although we’ve made some gains during the first half of 2023, we did not gain enough members to properly fund our legislative initiatives.

Q: If I contribute to OD-EYEPAC, do I still need to pay for the special assessment?

A: Yes. OD-EYEPAC contributions go specifically to support political campaigns of statewide legislators that are supportive and understanding of the optometric profession.

Q: Where will the money go?

A: A dues assessment of \$350 per member will raise approximately \$400,000. This money will help the FOA with the added legal fees, public relations and consulting fees that will be required to mount a strong defense during the 2024 legislative session. If our membership levels hold steady and we can increase our OD-EYEPAC contributions by another 5%, we expect to have the necessary funds to mount an offensive campaign in the 2025 legislative session and beyond.

Q: Do the members of the FOA Board of Trustees get paid for their service on the board?

A: No. Each board member is reimbursed for their travel, but they volunteer their time out of their offices, they pay membership dues, and contribute to OD-EYEPAC at a minimum of \$1,000 per year.

Q: Are we expecting additional attacks to our profession next year?

A: Yes. Although the legislative session does not begin until January 2024, legislators meet in 2023 for committee week and we fully expect a number of anti-optometry bills or language within other bills to surface.

Q: Does the board make the decision to implement a dues assessment or does the membership get a vote?

A: Each year during the annual FOA convention, the FOA Board of Trustees presents the annual budget for the following calendar year during HOD I with members in attendance voting on the budget the following day during HOD II.

Q: What happens if there is no dues assessment?

A: The FOA Board of Trustees realizes that without a small dues assessment, the ability to properly defend our profession during the 2024 legislative session will be extremely difficult, and the opportunity for future legislation to enhance and advance the profession will be jeopardized.

Q: How do I pay for the assessment?

A: The FOA Board of Trustees would recommend each OD send a check to the FOA office written to “Florida Optometric Association” and write “2024 dues assessment” in the memo. Otherwise, each member will be billed during the 2024 billing cycle. Since most members pay their dues quarterly, this would amount to \$87.50 per quarter.

Q: Are my dues tax deductible?

A: Yes, a portion of your FOA dues is deductible. Federal legislation declares certain lobbying-related expenses not deductible from your income taxes. The FOA’s certified public accountants have determined some of the dues you invest in organized optometry are not deductible. 32% of your FOA dues are the estimated non-deductible portion for the 2022 year. AOA has stated that the estimated non-deductible portion of AOA dues for 2022 is 7%. FOA will provide the estimated non-deductible portion of dues for 2023 at the end of the year. Please consult your accountant for more details.