

CAHIP – A Year In Review – 2025-2026

Our Association leadership year flies by in the blink of an eye, which makes me especially appreciative of “awards season”—a moment to reflect on the months behind us and evaluate how closely we’ve aligned with the goals set at the beginning of the board year.

(And Pat Stifler—thank you for your continued service to the state and for recognizing the incredible work happening across our local chapters.)

This year, our collective goals focused on demonstrating clear value to our members—you—in both advocacy and our professional community. There is real value in learning from one another—from peers doing similar work with different experiences and perspectives. Equally important is the ability to share challenges openly with those who understand—and often have solutions.

Our leadership year runs from July to July, and April marks the time when chapters across the country submit award applications with documented proof of completion. The guiding principle is simple: follow the chapter award criteria, meet the objectives, and you can be confident you are running a successful chapter.

So here we go—a walkthrough of the Landmark Award criteria for the State of California:

To start, with the leadership of our VP of Communications, Kristie Scavarda, we have produced a consistent monthly newsletter (https://cahip.com/CAHIP_Connection) keeping members informed—not only on association and industry updates, statewide events, but also on the tangible value of membership. If you’ve missed our “Member Value Moments,” now available in an easy YouTube format, I encourage you to check them out. (<https://www.youtube.com/@CAHIPInfo>) These videos feature conversations with professionals across the country highlighting the resources and advantages your membership provides.

At the national level, California continues to show up strong. Our delegation was well represented at Convention—where the National Board is elected—as well as in Washington, D.C., where many of us meet directly with federal legislators and policymakers.

CA leaders engaged at the Region 8 Leadership Conference in Washington State, reinforcing our commitment to leadership development and professional growth.

CAHIP remains committed to strong governance. We actively review and publish our bylaws and policies, supported by a dedicated Governance Committee led by Immediate Past President Rosamaria Marrujo, ensuring thoughtful evaluation and continuous improvement.

Before July 1, 2025 CA leadership conducted a three-part strategic planning process (https://cahip.com/images/downloads/Strategic_Plan/strategic_plan_final.2025.2026.pdf), beginning with a statewide leadership session and expanding to include all 10 local chapter leaders. Together, we identified solutions to better serve our members, acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities across our chapters. We concluded with clear, actionable goals from each board chair—creating alignment and accountability across the organization.

We have conducted multiple member surveys to take the temperature of our membership and ensure our efforts are aligned with what matters most to you. We’ve delivered content across all industry segments, from Employee Benefits to Medicare, and created a space for innovation and collaboration through our sold-out Innovation Expo in February. A huge thank you to Manny and the entire planning committee—this event received outstanding feedback and set a high bar for future programming.

Our local chapters continue to lead the way with Medicare Summits across the state, and thanks to State Professional Development Chair Manny Alcaine, along with Medicare Chairs Brian Billhartz and Greg Wolin, we hosted a statewide virtual wrap-up session—ensuring no member misses critical content, regardless of location.

CAHIP maintains an active awards program (<https://cahip.com/Awards>), encouraging participation at both the state and national levels. Our State Capitol Summit continues to be a standout event, and we are especially excited to welcome Department of Insurance Commissioner candidates this year.

And yes—our VP of CAHIP PAC Jordan Futch has planned a fundraiser at the River Cats ballpark (tickets are limited, so don't wait).

When it comes to advocacy, California leadership is second to none.

Our Legislative Advocate, Faith Borges, has consistently elevated the role of agents in serving both consumers and employers. VP of Legislation Janet Powelson has led an exceptional bill review process while keeping a steady pulse on both state and federal activity.

Janet was also recognized with the Legislative Achievement Award at the National Capitol Conference—a well-deserved honor.

Through monthly legislative calls, collaboration with coalition partners (NAIFA, HAFA, IIABCAL), and direct engagement with key agencies—including the Department of Insurance, DMHC, and the Governor's Office, we continue to advocate strongly for our profession and those we serve.

Additionally, I'm honored to represent independent agents in monthly stakeholder meetings with CMS, alongside our NABIP legislative team.

We applaud standout leadership moments—Vanessa Ignacio's impactful testimony before the CA Senate Health Committee and President-Elect Craig Gussin's local television appearances, bringing real-time market insights to the public. Monica Spencer is still holding space for DEI&B with a heavy focus on inclusivity and belonging.

As I write this, we are in month two of our three-month Membership Madness campaign.

A special acknowledgment to VP of Membership Irma Romero, now in her fourth year leading this effort. Her passion, creativity, and commitment to growth have transformed how we approach membership. From live quarterly orientations to collaborative working sessions with chapter leaders, her impact is undeniable.

One standout initiative—“[Trail Talks on the Road](#)”—has brought connection and visibility across the state, with just two chapters remaining to complete scheduling the state tour.

Two newer initiatives I am especially proud of focus on developing the next generation of leaders:

1. The Farm Team (https://cahip.com/CAHIP_Farm_Team) – A low-commitment, high-impact opportunity for members to engage, learn, and contribute.
 2. Emerging Leaders Pilot Program (<https://cahip.com/EmergingLeader>) – Adapted from Pennsylvania, this program provides education, connection, and long-term cohort support for rising professionals.
- Thank you to Pat Burns and Ashley Wong for their leadership in bringing these programs to life.

Of course, none of this happens without resources. VP of Corporate Relations Elizabeth Underhill leads ongoing efforts to build meaningful partnerships. A recent member survey—focused specifically on agents—provided clear data demonstrating the significant value our members place on companies that support our association.

And finally, where it matters most—our local chapters.

This year, every chapter has demonstrated passion and commitment. From events and education to advocacy and community-building, the impact is clear. What we need now is more hands to support the incredible work already underway.

To every volunteer who has given their time, talent, and resources, thank you. You are the backbone of this organization.

We are also fortunate to have the steady leadership of our Executive Director, Sharon Frank of Jaffe Services, along with the broader network of executive directors supporting California chapters.

As we reflect on this past year, what stands out most is not just what we accomplished—but how intentionally we aligned our work to our goals. Our strategic guardrails—being right-sized for volunteers, prioritizing membership, operating as one unified team, building community, and maintaining a consistent leadership voice—were not just ideas; they became the framework for action. Because of that alignment, we did more than stay active—we stayed focused. And in doing so, we strengthened the value and experience of CAHIP membership across California.

None of this happens without people, leaders who step forward, members who engage, and a shared commitment to something bigger than any one of us.

To capture that spirit, we've created a short video that reflects the energy, collaboration, and leadership that define California—because our story is best told by the people living it every day.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service,



Dawn McFarland
CAHIP President

Video

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