News from the
American College of Surgeons

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Arkansas Surgeon Dr. Charles Mabry Receives ACS Distinguished Service Award
Dr. Mabry honored for advancing trauma care and championing compensation efforts for surgeons

WASHINGTON (September 26, 2026) — Charles Mabry, MD, FACS, chief of surgery at Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who has served the American College of Surgeons (ACS) in numerous leadership roles, received the ACS's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award.

The award was presented to Dr. Mabry at Convocation during the ACS Clinical Congress 2026 in Washington, D.C., September 26-29, where thousands of surgeons convene each year to advance surgical quality, patient safety, and access to care.

Established in 1957 by the ACS Board of Regents, the award recognizes exceptional and continuous service by an ACS Fellow, as well as a career marked by an outstanding emphasis on patient care and commitment to the ideals of surgical practice.

"I'm very honored," Dr. Mabry said. "I never thought I'd get such a prestigious award."

Transforming Trauma Care

Dr. Mabry's engagement with the ACS began during his residency at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock, when he first encountered Advanced Trauma Life Support® (ATLS®). The program, now in its 11th edition and approaching its 50th anniversary, was brand new at the time. He continues his academic work as an associate professor in the Department of Surgery, College of Medicine, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS).

As he completed his residency and began practicing surgery, Dr. Mabry was asked to develop the first trauma service at UAMS Medical Center. He became an ATLS instructor, serving for 12 years and receiving the 1986 ACS Young Surgeon Award in recognition of his work.

He has remained involved in trauma care and education ever since. As he advanced in his career to become chief of surgery at Jefferson Regional Medical Center, he also engaged with the ACS through several trauma care programs. These roles included serving as Arkansas state chair of the ACS Committee on Trauma and course director for the Arkansas Trauma Evaluation and Management (TEAM)™ Course, a collaboration between the Arkansas Trauma Society and Arkansas ACS Chapter.

Outside the ACS, he has served as medical director of the Arkansas Trauma Society and chair of the Governor's Trauma Advisory Council within the Arkansas Trauma System. He remains involved in training trauma teams, developing trauma education for the state as part of the

Arkansas trauma system and the Arkansas Chapter of the ACS, including different courses to teach surgeons and emergency physicians, nurses, and paramedics.

“How we handle trauma patients now is really, truly, completely different than in the 1970s,” he said. “It’s been very interesting and very exciting to me to see the development of trauma over the years and how we’ve helped in managing trauma.”

He credits the ACS with helping make that progress possible: “One of the things that has been very gratifying to me is to take the lessons learned at the national level and the international level and then incorporate that into our education here in Arkansas.”

Dr. Mabry cited a 2024 study published in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* to further explain the impact. “One of the papers that I participated in was a study of the preventable mortality rate over time. Before the trauma system, around 30% of the trauma deaths were judged to be preventable or possibly preventable. Now we’re down to around 1% or 2% preventable, and around 5% possibly preventable. So, it’s really dropped over time,” he said.

Defending Surgeon Compensation and Serving as a Lifelong Leader

Dr. Mabry also has contributed to the ACS General Surgery Coding and Reimbursement Committee (GSCRC) for nearly 35 years.

The work focuses on ensuring that Current Procedural Terminology codes and relative value units for surgical procedures are valued appropriately. Dr. Mabry is proud to be part of the team of Fellows who have represented general surgeons, who do not have a specialty-specific society outside the ACS, on the American Medical Association/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee.

“The GSCRC does a lot of defensive work to prevent incorrect valuation of codes,” he explained. “We’ve been very successful at preventing damage to the reimbursement for general surgeons over many years.”

His contributions to the ACS have encompassed many roles beyond trauma and compensation issues. These include serving as course director for the ACS Basic and Advanced Coding Seminar, president of the ACS Arkansas Chapter, a member of the ACS Advisory Councils on General Surgery, Pediatric Surgery, and Health Policy, and chair of the ACS Health Policy Advisory Committee. Dr. Mabry also served on the ACS Board of Regents from 2003 to 2011 and as 2016–2017 ACS first vice-president.

“In looking back over my career, I’ve gained so much from working in the College and working with the Regents, Governors, and Executive Directors, and all the directors in the College. It’s just unbelievable how much I’ve learned from them. They are all very good mentors, and they want to teach you,” he said.

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About the American College of Surgeons
The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and improve the quality of care for all surgical patients. The ACS is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The ACS has approximately 95,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world. "FACS" designates that a surgeon is a Fellow of the ACS.

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