Becoming a Nurse Legislator: Advocating for the Nursing Profession

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Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses

Background

**AMSN Legislative Team**
- Monitors legislative and regulatory activity that has an impact on medical-surgical nursing
- Recommends action to the AMSN Executive Team regarding legislative issues, endorsements and alliances
- Communicates timely information to members regarding legislative issues of interest to medical-surgical nurses and how they may respond
- Provides education to AMSN members regarding the legislative process, health care reform, and other legislative issues

**Nurse In Washington Internship (NIWI)**
- The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) program is held for three days in February, March, or April of each year in Washington, D.C., and sponsored by The Nursing Organizations Alliance (The Alliance).
- NIWI is open to any RN or nursing student interested in learning more about the legislative process. There is no application or acceptance process to attend NIWI. You simply register.
- 62 nursing organizations are involved in The Alliance.
- These organizations come together at NIWI to advocate for important resources.

**NIWI Overview**
- Three day workshop:
  - Day 1 and 2: Learn the importance of a coordinated message
  - Learn about the right timing of the message
  - Learn how to present the message
  - Discover the key steps in the legislative process
  - Identify techniques to advance legislative issues at the grassroots level
  - Identify legislative, political, and economic forces driving health care policy
  - Learn to conduct Capitol Hill meetings
- Day 3:
  - Visit the Hill and present the “asks” to senators and legislators across the United States

Nurse Involvement in the Legislative Process

**American Nurse Involvement in the Legislative Process**
- A united nursing voice = power
- You can be involved and influence policy at the local and national level
- Nurses can learn how to work effectively with legislative staff to advance policy agendas
- Learn the key steps to effect change in the legislative process

**The Asks**
- Asks include global nursing issues that NIWI participants will discuss during meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill
- Provided by The Nursing Community, which is a coalition of national professional nursing associations
- The Nursing Community is dedicated to building consensus and advocating for a wide spectrum of healthcare and nursing issues, including practice, education, and research

**United States House of Representatives**
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs receive $244 million in funding in fiscal year 2017
- Requests for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) receive $157 million in funding for fiscal year 2017
- Co-sponsor the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act

**United States Senate**
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs receive $244 million in funding in fiscal year 2017
- Requests for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) receive $157 million in funding for fiscal year 2017
- Co-sponsor the Veterans Health Care Staffing Improvement Act

Capitol Hill Visits

- NIWI participants met with local House of Representatives and Senate leaders
- In addition to discussing “The Asks,” materials were left behind that provided more in-depth explanation of the reason(s) funding is needed for nursing resources.

Testimonials

- “I first learned about the Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) program through my courses for my MSN. When I saw that NIWI offers a grant to attend NIWI, I was interested in attending and submitted my application. I was contacted by AMSN about the possibility of joining their legislative team, and I jumped at the chance to learn more about how nurses can shape health legislation. Attending NIWI in March 2016 was a powerful experience. I learned how to approach the legislators to advocate for a united voice. Visiting Washington D.C. and speaking to the legislative staff was a great experience. Going forward, I am better prepared to engage legislators and have a better understanding of how nurses can shape healthcare law.” — Carol Farmer
- “Going to Capitol Hill was the highlight of the conference. Having the opportunity to be on Capitol Hill where our congressmen and women discuss legislation and where the Supreme Court renders decisions based on what their constituents want.” — Linda Parry-Carney

Professional Advocacy Impact

**Institute of Medicine’s Four Key Messages**
- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training. (VA Health Care Staffing Improvement Act)
- Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression. (Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act)
- Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health care professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States. (Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs)
- Effective workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and information infrastructure. (NINR funding)

**Conclusion**
- The health care environment is constantly changing and AMSN recognizes the need to advocate influence changes in policies, laws, or regulations that govern the overall health care system
- Get involved! Advocacy depends on having the will, the time, the energy, and the power needed to function in the legislative arena. Find that voice, be the advisor, and advocate for the nursing profession!

How to Get Started

- Every nurse should be a registered voter
- Understand how you are represented in Washington D.C.
- Find your U.S. Senators at www.senate.gov
- Find your Representative at www.house.gov
- Reach you to those who represent you; introduce yourself and share your willingness to be available to serve as an expert when healthcare issues are being discussed.
- Remember: “Legislators do not act alone. They make decisions based on what their constituents want.” — Linda Parry-Carney

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