The NLN promotes excellence in nursing education to build a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the health of our nation.
Dedicated to excellence in nursing and preparing the nursing workforce to meet the health care needs of our diverse populations, the National League for Nursing is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education. The NLN represents all types of nursing education programs – doctoral, master’s, baccalaureate, associate degree, diploma, and licensed practical. With more than 1,200 nursing schools and health care agencies, 40,000 individual members comprising nurses, educators, administrators, public members, and 26 regional constituent leagues representing 30 states, the NLN is a powerful voice for public policy.

Implicit in the League’s core values of **caring, integrity, diversity, and excellence** is civic engagement in shaping public policies that affect everyone’s health and quality of care.

**The NLN’s 2015 - 2016 Public Policy Agenda:**

- Articulates priority issues addressed by the NLN
- Informs members and colleague organizations, the public, government officials, and the media about the NLN’s public policy interests
- Provides a framework for the NLN’s analysis and synthesis of developments that influence public policy

**Government Affairs at the NLN**

The elected Board of Governors and board Public Policy Committee are responsible for the oversight of the NLN’s government affairs activities. The League understands that this is a time of great opportunity in health care. Collaboration creates meaningful outcomes and NLN members seek partnerships with legislators and regulators who value the health of our nation. Keeping the nation’s health demands and the economic environment in mind, in 2015 and 2016, the NLN will focus on the following priorities:

- **Access**
- **Education**
- **Diversity**
- **Workforce**
In 2015 and 2016, the NLN will:

- Support maximizing education funding for health care professionals who commit to practice in underserved areas.

- Advocate for funding that meets the challenges of a diverse, ever-changing health care environment.

- Promote access to primary care through the enhancement of services by local community health centers and neighborhood clinics.

- Advocate for increased funding for the continuum of wellness services and the education of the public including emergent health care issues and preparedness.

- Champion policies and programs that build and strengthen capacity for interprofessional education and practice.

- Collaborate with other organizations to promote scope of practice that allows all nurses to practice to the full extent of their education, license, and experience.

Fundamental to the nursing profession and the NLN is the principle that all individuals have equitable access to comprehensive health and wellness care addressing all medical conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders. Prior to the start of the major Affordable Care Act provisions, more than 41 million people in our communities lacked health insurance; millions more had inadequate coverage.

To attain its triple aim of better health care, better care experience, and lower cost of care, health care reform is driving changes in how we organize and coordinate delivery systems. Quality health care depends on planning and funding for services including awareness of national strategies. Of primary importance is the need to contend with emergent issues while continuing to focus on wellness services, preparedness, and education of the public.

Interprofessional team-based education and care are key features of new health care delivery models and integral to the national strategy of creating a better health system. Well-functioning practice teams have been shown to improve access to care, increase quality of care and health outcomes, provide greater efficiencies, reduce costs, amend provider shortages, and increase professional satisfaction.
In 2015 and 2016, the NLN will:

- Support policies that provide nursing education programs with the necessary faculty to educate the next generation of nurses.
- Advocate for funding to expand nurse faculty education programs that enhance the development of faculty as educator-scholars, including leadership programs to build educational research capacity and create a more diverse faculty workforce.
- Support funding of research initiatives that promote the scholarship of teaching and advance the science of nursing education.

Achieving health system reform goals will turn on investing in the education of a 21st-century health care workforce. However, as the US tackles the workforce shortage that exacerbates the stress in the health care system, nursing programs across the country are rejecting qualified candidates because there is not enough faculty to teach them. Sixty-four percent of all nursing programs turn away qualified applicants. Pre-licensure nursing programs, which serve as the gateway into the nursing workforce, reject 72 percent of qualified applicants due to limited space.

NLN research on America’s nearly 60,000 nurse educators shows that a core cause of the shortage is an aging and overworked faculty who earn less than nurses entering clinical practice. Sixty percent of all full-time nurse faculty members are 45- to 60-years old. Fifty-five percent of nurse faculty say they are likely to leave academic nursing by 2020. The ongoing support from the Title VIII - Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) is critical to filling this gap. In FY 2013, NFLP provided loans to 2,401 students pursuing faculty preparation. About 17 percent of these loans were awarded to underrepresented minorities.

Infrastructure development is critical to advancing the science of nursing education. This will increase the pool of nurse investigators and nurse educators, expand programs to develop partnerships between research-intensive environments and smaller colleges and universities, and promote career development for nurse-researchers.
In 2015 and 2016, the NLN will:

- Support government efforts, such as Title VII - Health Professions, to promote greater ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity, and minority representation among nurses and nurse educators.

- Call on the federal government to expand investment in resources that enrich and sustain culturally competent nursing education that leads to equitable, interprofessional, evidence-based health care delivery.

- Support policy initiatives that promote data collection and analysis for timely and evidence-based nurse workforce planning.

Health disparities are multi-dimensional and exist throughout the United States. These preventable differences in health and health outcomes adversely affect individuals who experience obstacles based on race/ethnicity; religion; socioeconomic status; age; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; gender identity; and/or geography. The NLN’s goal to attain health equity requires valuing every person equally, with enduring efforts to address avoidable inequalities and injustices.

Besides representing an untapped talent pool to remedy the nationwide nursing shortage, diversity in nursing is essential to developing a health care system that understands and addresses the needs of our rapidly changing population. Our nation is enriched by cultural complexity – 37 percent of our population identify as racial and ethnic minorities. Yet diversity eludes the nursing student and nurse educator populations. Minorities only constitute 26 percent of the student population and males only 16 percent of pre-licensure RN students. Workforce diversity is especially needed where research indicates that factors such as societal biases and stereotyping, communication barriers, limited cultural sensitivity and competence, and system and organizational determinants contribute to health care inequities.
In 2015 and 2016, the NLN will:

- Advocate for increased funding for Title VIII - Nursing Workforce Development Programs to strengthen cost-effective initiatives that address challenges in health care.

- Support policy initiatives to establish a seamless infrastructure that promotes lifelong learning and academic and professional progression of appropriately educated nurses – from practical and vocational to doctorally prepared.

- Collaborate with other organizations to promote research and the use of evidence-based policy strategies for health care capacity building.

Health inequities, inflated costs, and poor health care outcomes are intensifying because of today’s shortfall of appropriately prepared RNs. With 4.2 million active, licensed RNs, nurses are the primary professionals delivering quality health care in the nation. The RN workforce is projected to grow by 19.4 percent from 2012 to 2022, resulting in 1,052,600 job openings. This increase is fueled by technological advancements for treatments, preventive care needs, expanding demand from new health reform enrollments, and accelerating demand from the two million Baby Boomers aging into Medicare every year. The situation is further affected by the needed replacement of some 525,700 jobs vacated by RNs expected to leave the profession and/or retire by 2022.

The nursing shortage continues to outpace the level of federal resources allocated by Congress to help alleviate it. Appropriations for nursing education are inconsistent with the health care reality facing our nation today. It is crucial to fund research to determine whether the demand for health care providers is being met, to develop accurate and replicable models for projecting workforce capacity, to assess the efficient use of the health care workforce, and to evaluate education and workforce activities to increase retention in the nursing profession. Insufficient federal investments in the nursing workforce will diminish human resource development, a shortsighted course of action that further jeopardizes access to, and the quality of, the nation’s health care delivery.