



Partisan Bickering Brings Abrupt End to Appropriations Process

The fate of the FY 2009 appropriations for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs was left in limbo in late June when a party dispute brought an abrupt halt to the House Appropriations Committee mark up of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education funding bill. Republicans tried to force the committee to take up a bill covering the Interior Department that they believed could be used to lower fuel prices and which was not on the committee’s agenda for discussion. Appropriations chairman David R. Obey (D-WI), incensed at his Republican colleagues for pulling what he called a “political stunt,” threatened to halt the appropriations process. “I’ll see them in September on a CR,” he said, referring to a continuing resolution – a measure used to keep the government running when lawmakers and the president cannot agree on annual appropriations bills.

In June the Senate Appropriations Committee and the House Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education approved bills that would provide FY 2009 funding increases for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs. The Senate bill contained an \$11.6 million increase; the House bill, an \$18.4 million increase. On the following page is a table reflecting the current appropriations status for Title VIII.

If Obey stands by his threat to fund the government through a continuing resolution – and there is no indication that he will not – that essentially bring this year’s appropriations process to an end. More’s the pity since it is the first time since the Nurse Reinvestment Act was passed that the number offered by the House is larger than that of the Senate. There is every indication in both the House and Senate that these bills will not be enacted until after a new president is sworn into office. It’s continuing to be a long, hot summer, and will be a very contentious fall.

Streamlining the Next Edition of “Healthy People”

At the beginning of each decade since 1980, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a version of the document, *Healthy People*, to set national health objectives. The first edition laid out 226 objectives. Healthy People 2000 had 312 objectives. By the time Healthy People 2010 was issued, the document attempted to tackle 467 objectives, with some items having as many as 28 subparts. Subjects ranged from diabetes and mental health to health care access. But, in recognition that (Cont’d page 3)

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**Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs
(Amounts in Thousands)**

	FY 2005 Final	FY 2006 Final	FY 2007 Final	FY 2008 Final	FY 2009 President's Budget	FY 2009 House Approps Subcom	FY 2009 Senate Approps Committee
Total	\$150,661	\$149,679	\$149,679	\$156,046	\$109,853	\$174,409	\$167,652
Advanced Education Nursing	58,160	57,061	57,061	61,875	- 0 -	61,875	62,975
Comprehensive Geriatric Education	3,450	3,392	3,392	3,333	3,392	3,392	3,392
Loan Repayment & Scholarships	31,482	31,055	31,055	30,512	43,744	43,744	40,000
Nurse Education, Practice & Retention Grants	36,468	37,291	37,291	36,640	37,291	37,291	37,291
Nursing Faculty Loan Program	4,831	4,773	4,773	7,860	9,319	12,000	7,887
Nursing Workforce Diversity	16,270	16,107	16,107	15,826	16,107	16,107	16,107

HEA Reauthorization Provides a Boost for Nursing

On July 31, 2008, Congress passed H.R. 4137, the **Higher Education Opportunity Act**, marking the first reauthorization of the **Higher Education Act (HEA)** in a decade. The final bill has a number of provisions directed at nursing education.

■ **Loan Repayment for Nurses**

Designates registered nursing as an “area of national need,” thereby allowing RNs working full time in a clinical setting or as faculty of nursing to have access to \$10,000 in higher education loan repayments.

■ **Graduate Assistance**

Allow the secretary of education to provide grants to colleges of nursing and graduate nursing students to support post baccalaureate nursing education. In order to receive these funds, the secretary of education would have to designate nursing as an "area of national need."

■ **Capitation Programs for Schools of Nursing**

If H.R. 4137 is fully funded, the capitation programs should encourage schools of nursing to increase capacity by providing \$3,000 grants for each matriculated nursing student above and beyond the average number of students calculated over the previous four years. These funds would be divided among graduate-level (20 percent), baccalaureate (40 percent), and associate-degree (40 percent) programs. [\(Cont'd page 3\)](#)

Streamlining the Next Edition of “Healthy People” (Cont’d from page 1)

that the marching orders have become unwieldy, Healthy People 2020 is expected to be trimmed down.

Officials say the push to streamline the document likely will be achieved by shifting away from disease-specific goals to those that affect risks for several medical conditions. For example, goals in Healthy People 2010 included reducing the rates of diabetes, end-stage renal disease, and cardiovascular death, although some specific strategies overlapped. Experts recognize that, because of how public health works, it will not be possible to pay attention exclusively to risk.

Those involved in the revamp want to go beyond eliminating health disparities to achieving health equity and addressing environmental factors that may be interfering with the realization of some goals. Healthy People 2020 also is expected to establish objectives that take into account how the definition of health and wellness changes over a person’s lifespan.

Officials are seeking input from more diverse sources than in previous editions. An inter-agency work group includes representatives from federal agencies both in and out of HHS. While past editions have taken public comment into account, for the first time outside experts have been selected to form the Secretary’s Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020. Unfortunately, and despite many nursing organizations – including the **NLN** –

nominating people for appointment to the advisory committee, no nurse was appointed to the group.

At an open meeting held in Chicago this spring, concerns about impediments to achieving the initiative’s goals were raised. Significant focus surrounded the idea that a lack of access to care is hindering progress. Minority health experts expressed interest in developing goals specific to various races and ethnicities and not based on those set for Caucasians. They also wanted to better define the concept of health equity and to take into account genetic differences, such as the African-American predisposition for sickle cell anemia.

Finally, gay health advocates lobbied for the addition of questions about sexual orientation in the various survey tools public health officials use to assess progress. Questions about age, gender, race, and ethnicity already are standard, and Healthy People 2010 was accompanied by the **Companion Document for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health**. Those proposing this change say the information gleaned will increase the visibility of disparities associated with sexual orientation.

The framework and overarching goals for 2020 will be released by the beginning of next year. The full Healthy People 2020 will be published in 2010. Comments for the document are being taken at <http://www.healthypeople.gov/hp2020/comments>.

HEA Reauthorization Provides a Boost for Nursing (Cont’d from page 2)

■ Study on Nursing School Capacity

Incorporates provisions of the **Nursing School Capacity Act**, H.R. 677. If funding is allocated, the Institute of Medicine will conduct a study to (1) identify constraints encountered by schools of nursing in admitting and graduating the number of RNs necessary to ensure patient safety and meet the need for quality assurance in the provision of health care; and (2) develop recommendations to alleviate the constraints both short- and long-term.

President Bush is expected to sign the bill shortly.

HRSA Awards Grants Supporting Faculty & Increasing Diversity

On August 1, 2008, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced \$12 million in grants to 36 academic institutions and three hospital organizations. According to HRSA administrator Elizabeth Duke, “Two of the programs...the Nurse Education Practice and Retention Program and the Faculty Development: Integrated Technology into Nursing Education and Practice Initiative – support a variety of efforts at universities to improve the training of nurses. The other grants, distributed through our Nursing Workforce Diversity program, seek to increase the number of nurses from disadvantaged backgrounds. Because those graduates often return to serve in their home communities, these grants help improve the distribution of patient care and reduce persistent health disparities.”

- ▶ Twenty-eight new Nurse Education Practice and Retention Program grants worth \$8.5 million were awarded to 25 academic institutions and three hospital organizations. The program supported 21,145 participants in FY 2007.
- ▶ Two new grants totaling almost \$600,000 for “Faculty Development: Integrated Technology into Nursing Education and Practice Initiative” went to Drexel University in Philadelphia and the University of Washington, Seattle. These grants support partnerships among collegiate schools of nursing, academic health centers, accredited public or private institutions, and other organizations. Program efforts help nurse faculty integrate technologies related to simulated learning, informatics, and telehealth into the nursing curriculum.
- ▶ Nine new Nursing Workforce Diversity Program awards totaling \$2.8 million were made to seven universities and two community colleges. These funds will help educate and support pre-nursing and nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including racial and ethnic minorities underrepresented among registered nurses. Diversity grants supported 32,847 participants in FY 2007.

VA Announces New Nursing Academy Sites

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on July 31 announced the establishment of seven new partnerships with nursing schools across the country. “The expanded role of VA in the education of nurses will ensure the Department has the nurses needed to continue our world-class health care for veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs James B. Peake. “The VA Nursing Academy expands our teaching faculty, improves recruitment and retention, and creates new educational and research opportunities.”

The VA Nursing Academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington, D.C. It expands learning opportunities for nursing students at VA facilities, funds additional faculty positions so competitively selected nursing school partners will accept additional baccalaureate-level students, and

increases recruitment and retention of VA nurses. The five-year, \$40 million program began in 2007. With the addition of the seven new partnerships, this brings to 10 the number of collaborations under the VA Nursing Academy.

The VA’s “Enhancing Academic Partnerships” pilot program enables competitively selected VA-nursing school partnerships to expand the number of nursing faculty, enhance the professional and scholarly development of nurses, increase student enrollment by about 1,000 students, and promote innovations in nursing education.

Additional information about the pilot program can be obtained from the VA’s Office of Academic Affiliations web site at <http://www.va.gov/oaa>.