

NLN Board of Governors Advocates for Increases to Stem Faculty Shortage

The NLN Board of Governors took to Capitol Hill on April 27. During the meetings with their congressional delegations, board members advocated for increased funding for Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs, especially for remedies directed at the nursing faculty shortage. As opposed to last year’s visits, this year, most of the approximately 35 offices visited were unaware of the faculty shortage, though not necessarily the effect that it was having in their particular states.

Armed with facts and figures, the board members took on the role of advocates. In their visits, they noted that:

- ✓ Federal investment in nursing education is less than six hundred-thousandths of 1 percent of the total federal budget.

- ✓ Title VIII Nurse Workforce Development Programs – currently funded at \$149.7 million (FY 2006) – are the primary source of federal funding for nursing education.



From the left, NLN president Toni Bargagliotti, Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AR), and NLN treasurer Cathleen Schultz

- ✓ In 1974, during the last serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today's dollars that would be worth \$592 million, approximately four times what the federal government is spending now.

- ✓ Most health care in the United States is delivered by nurses who constitute the nation's largest health care profession with an estimated 2.9 million licensed registered nurses (RNs).

- ✓ During the 10-year span of 2002 to 2012, health care facilities will need to fill more than 1.1 million RN job openings. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projects that, absent aggressive intervention, the RN workforce will fall 29 percent below requirements by the year 2020.

- ✓ In 1980, 40.5 percent of RNs were under the age of 35; today less than 16.6 percent of RNs are under the age of 35. (Cont'd page 2)

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Federal Budget Update

Positive progress has been made on boosting funding levels for health programs. Pressure from a broad array of health and education groups, including the **NLN**, has resulted in increasing FY 2007 funding levels for both the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittees. In March, the Senate adopted an amendment to its Budget Resolution, on a strong 73-27 vote, to provide an additional \$7 billion in funding for health and education programs in FY 2007. Last week House Appropriations chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) announced the subcommittee allocations for FY 2007 and has provided the Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee with a slight 0.6 percent increase over FY 2006, but a full \$4.1 billion increase over the president's budget request for the programs, which includes Title VIII, under the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Changes in Leadership at HRSA

On May 9, 2006, Elizabeth Duke, chief administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced several changes in HRSA's leadership, including changes at the Division of Nursing. According to Duke, these new assignments are aimed at a single goal: to further HRSA's mission of expanding access to quality health care for all Americans who need it.

Kerry Nesseler will be the first director of the new Office of Commissioned Corps Affairs, reporting directly to the HRSA administrator. Annette Debisette has been named director of the Division of Nursing with former director Denise Geolot taking on a new role as director of the Center for Quality. All changes were effective May 15.

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- ✓ The number of full-time faculty needed to "fill the nursing gap" may be as high as 40,000. Currently, fewer than 20,000 full-time faculty are in the system.
- ✓ The average age of nurse educators is 48.5 years, but the estimated average age of faculty nurses with doctorates in nursing or a related field is 55.7 years.
- ✓ Nearly 1,800 full-time faculty members leave their positions each year.
- ✓ Only 350 to 400 nursing students receive doctoral degrees each year.
- ✓ An estimated 147,000 qualified applications were turned away from nursing programs at all levels for the academic year 2004-2005 in large part because of the severe faculty shortage.

Congress begins its Memorial Day recess on Friday. When they return, the appropriations process will be in full swing. The NLN will need the help of every member if we are to see any increase in the FY 2007 Title VIII budget. To stay on top of what is going on and to know how you can help, sign up to receive Email Alerts by going to the NLN's Public Policy Action Center. Scroll down to the NLN Email Alerts/Action E-List box, click it, and then fill out the form that is provided. Do it now!

Did you know? . . . for FY 2005, 93.8 percent of the Title VIII scholarship applications were not funded.

State Roundup

Wisconsin Expands Student Loans and Grants

University of Wisconsin students now can be awarded up to \$3,000 for Wisconsin Higher Education Grants through Senate Bill 481, which WI Governor Jim Doyle signed into law April 30th. The increase from \$2,500 to \$3,000 is effective during the upcoming 2006-07 academic year, and provides additional financial aid to students in the UW system that have the most need.

Doyle also signed Assembly Bill 387 to extend eligibility of the Nursing Student Loan Program to include students pursuing master's and doctoral nursing degrees. Under current law, only nursing students enrolled in associate or bachelor degree programs are eligible for the loans.

Florida Expands Nursing Education Programs

In an attempt to deal with its severe nursing shortage, the Florida legislature has agreed to spend about \$25 million to expand nursing education programs in the state. Lawmakers

also did something they rarely do when working out the budget for such programs – **they set aside \$4 million for a recurring program to encourage nurses to get advanced degrees so they can teach.** This funding is critical because one of the biggest reasons for the state's nursing shortage is that there are not enough teachers to expand Florida nursing education programs.

Maryland Launches Nurse Support Program

As part of the first round of funding in the state's newly launched Nurse Support Program, Maryland's Health Services Cost Review Commission awarded seven nursing institutions grants totaling \$6 million over five years. This unique venture teams hospitals and colleges to create partnerships to address the critical shortage of nurses. The projected outcomes of this first round of funding include increasing undergraduate nursing enrollments by 500 students and graduate nursing enrollments by an estimated 250-300 students. Of the 26 proposals submitted, awards were given to Coppin State University, University of Maryland, and Villa Julie College, among other recipients.