

## The NLN – No Stranger to the New Congress

Since the 110th Congress started its first session in January, the NLN has greatly increased its presence on Capitol Hill. From walking the halls of Congress to testifying on Title VIII, the NLN has been at the forefront of bringing the concerns of nurse educators to the attention of our federal legislators.

### FY 2008 BUDGET PRESS RELEASE

The year started off with the NLN finding President Bush's FY 2008 budget unacceptable in the face of the current nurse and nurse educator shortages. In a February 5 press release, the NLN stated that it "... believes that this unconscionable decrease of funding of \$44 million (or 29 percent) for the Nursing Workforce Development programs authorized by Title VIII of the **Public Health Service Act** is shortsighted and hazardous for the overall health of the nation."

NLN CEO Beverly Malone further stated, "As the nursing community has pointed out before, more than three decades ago during another less serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs, worth more than \$592 million in today's dollars. And despite the critical

need we face today, the Bush administration is proposing to spend only one fourth of what the federal government spent in 1974."

### TESTIMONY BEFORE CONGRESS

On March 29, Bev Malone testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies on funding for Title VIII. As evidenced by the questions addressed to her by the members of the subcommittee, Dr. Malone's testimony struck a chord with them – they readily understood the relationship between the worsening shortage of nurses and the concomitant shortage of nurse educators. Dr. Malone made a strong case for increased funding for Title VIII at a minimum of \$200 million for FY 2008.

### NLN BOARD ON CAPITOL HILL

The NLN Board of Governors took to Capitol Hill on May 17. 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. Armed with facts and figures, the board members took on the role of advocates. In their visits, they noted that:

- ✓ An increase in funding for Title VIII programs by at least \$50 million to a total of \$200 million in FY 2008 would raise the federal investment in Title VIII's nursing education to approximately seven hundred-thousandths of the total federal budget. (Cont'd page 2)

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## NLN Supports Nurse Faculty Higher Education Act

In a letter dated May 10, 2007, the **National League for Nursing** endorsed **H.R. 2384, the Nurse Faculty Higher Education Act**. Introduced by Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, this bill, if passed, would create a pilot program to increase the number of graduate educated nurse faculty. The legislation would provide grants to hospitals and health facilities permitting qualified nurses to earn a salary while they continue their education. Upon completion of the program, each nurse would be required to teach two years for each year of support received.

**NLN** CEO Beverly Malone commended Representative McCarthy on her continued leadership in addressing the nursing shortage and her commitment to provide educational opportunities for those who wish to become nurse faculty. Dr. Malone stated that “. . . the health of our nation will continue to be jeopardized as fewer nurses are available and able to provide the quality care we all need – and deserve – over the course of our lives. This legislation will help ensure that nurses exist in the future who are prepared and qualified to take care of you, your family, and all those in this country who will need our care.”

## ANSR Alliance Releases Consensus Document

**A**t an early May reception for members of Congress and their legislative assistants, the ANSR (Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief) Alliance released its **Consensus Document** entitled, **Assuring Quality Health Care for the United States: Building and Sustaining an Infrastructure of Qualified Nurses for the Nation**. The NLN is one of the co-facilitators of the Alliance and a key player in the development of the **Consensus Document**.

The ANSR Alliance is the largest collaborative effort among nursing associations working to pass legislation to stem the nursing shortage. Forty-seven nursing organizations support its legislative platform. The comprehensive approach detailed in the **Consensus Document** combines public policy initiatives with nursing association efforts to highlight the rewards of nursing, bring more nurses into the profession, and provide opportunities for professional advancement.

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- ✓ With an estimated 2.9 million licensed RNs and APRNs, nurses represent the largest occupation of all health care workers in the United States.
- ✓ Nearly half of the RN workforce is expected to reach retirement age within the next 10 to 15 years.
- ✓ The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that RNs are projected to create the second largest number of new jobs among all occupations in the time period spanning 2004 - 2014. During this time period, the health care system will require more than 1.2 million new nurses.
- ✓ The Health Resources and Services Administration projects that, absent aggressive intervention, the RN workforce will fall 36 percent below requirements by the year 2020.
- ✓ Almost two-thirds of all full-time nurse faculty members in 2006 were 45- to 60-years old and likely to retire in the next five to 15 years.
- ✓ A mean of 1.4 full-time faculty members per nursing program in the United States left their positions in nursing education in 2006.
- ✓ In academe, the median nine-month salary for non-administrative faculty is \$47,435 for assistant professors and \$65,000 for full professors, with some salaries for full professors as low as \$36,792 for nine months. By comparison, the mean salary for an RN is \$56,785 according to the preliminary findings of the **2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses**.

## From the States . . .

### **New York Budget Addresses Nurse Shortage**

The current budget for New York includes funding for several programs aimed at combating the state's nurse and nurse educator shortages. To help independent colleges and universities expand and improve their nursing education programs, the budget includes \$1,027,000 in new money. The funds are available to associate degree and baccalaureate programs at nonprofit institutions, and will be provided on a per-student basis, with \$250 per student going to two-year programs and \$500 per student going to four-year programs.

In addition, half of the \$4 million available to students through the Patricia K. McGee Nursing Faculty Scholarship and Loan Forgiveness Program will be allocated for scholarships. The amount previously allocated for scholarships was \$1 million. The program, which has been in place now for two years, provides assistance to RNs who are earning advanced degrees in order to teach nursing. Funds will be available to students pursuing either master's or doctoral degrees.

### **OR Bills Address Nurse and Faculty Shortages**

Three bills, sponsored by Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, RN (D-Gresham), seek to address Oregon's critical shortage of both nurses and instructors. The bills would allow retired nurses to teach without losing their retirement benefits, fund efforts to recruit and retain educators, and help nursing students pay for their education.

Under current Oregon law, nurses who are retired under the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) cannot be employed full-time by public employers as nursing instructors without the loss of their retirement benefits. SB 342 would amend the law to allow retired PERS nurses to work full-time as nursing instructors, and HB 2593 would allow PERS retirees to work full-time as nurses.

The third bill sponsored by Senator Anderson, SB 4, would allocate \$3.7 million to fund efforts to recruit and retain nursing faculty and provide scholarships for nursing students. The

bill also calls on the state to fund such initiatives as online distance learning programs for community colleges.

For some time now, area nurse advocates have been sounding the alarm about Oregon's nursing educator and work force shortages, so they enthusiastically welcomed the proposed legislation. Janie Griffin, Mt. Hood Community College's nursing program director, has wanted to be able to invite retired nurses, among others, to come and replace full-time faculty members who retire – whose numbers, she noted, are bound to increase as more and more instructors near retirement age.

One such nurse is Christine A. Tanner, a part-time professor of nursing at Oregon Health & Science University, and the author of the 2001 report ***Oregon's Nursing Shortage: A Public Health Crisis in the Making***. Dr. Tanner retired four years ago, but said she would gladly work fulltime if her PERS benefits were left intact. She added, "There's a tremendous number of faculty planning retirement in the near future and that will greatly hamper our ability to educate new nurses."

According to projections in the 2005 Oregon Center for Nursing report, 15 percent of the state's community college nursing faculty, and 23 percent of its baccalaureate nursing faculty will be eligible for retirement within five years. In view of these projections, Senator Anderson said, "It's absolutely critical that we have qualified nursing faculty."

### **Virginia Budget Includes Funding for Nurse Education**

In recognition of the fact that Virginia's pending nursing shortage is not due to a lack of people wanting to enter the profession, but rather is a result of a nursing faculty shortage, Governor Timothy M. Kaine (D) has included in the state budget measures to address the issue. Specifically, the budget calls for nursing faculty at colleges and community colleges to receive a 10 percent raise on top of any normal or scheduled raises they would have received. In addition, Kaine said the budget pro-

vides for the establishment of a \$200,000 scholarship “to encourage more nurses to go into masters programs and get a degree and become nursing faculty.”

Funding for two grants – each for \$750,000 – is also included in the budget. One grant to be awarded to the Northern Virginia Community College is to train more nurses and other health professionals in short supply. The other to the University of Virginia is to fund a loan forgiveness program for people who go into nursing doctorate programs with a focus on becoming instructors.

Like schools across the country, Virginia’s schools are having to turn prospective nursing students away due to the faculty shortage. Even at institutions that currently do not have any faculty vacancies, administrators are aware of the big picture. Namely, the Commonwealth does not have enough nursing education capacity to produce the number of new nursing graduates needed to replace those who will be retiring and to meet the current shortage, let alone meet the future shortage, anticipated being up to 20,000 in the next eight years.

### **Tennessee Raises Funds for Graduate Nursing Education Scholarship Program**

Early this year, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen (D) and state health officials kicked off a statewide campaign to raise funds for a scholarship program that would help current RNs pay the costs of earning graduate teaching degrees in nursing. The Graduate Nursing Loan Forgiveness Program, which Governor Bredesen signed into law in 2006, would direct \$1.4 million to pay for 100 RNs to return to school beginning in fall 2007, and would send 200 RNs back to school for graduate studies each subsequent year.

Under the scholarship program, nurses who earn their graduate degrees are expected to teach undergraduate nursing studies for four years. For every year a graduate of the program teaches in a Tennessee nursing school, 25 percent of the loan will be forgiven.

Supporters of the program include hospitals, health care organizations, and nursing

schools. Several of those supporters already have committed funds to the campaign. In order to sustain the program, Bredesen has said he will earmark funds in future budgets.

Those speaking at the ceremony launching the state campaign included BlueCross CEO Vicky Gregg and Lincoln-Memorial University president Nancy Moody. Ms. Gregg said, “The Governor has taken bold steps with this legislation, and I know that as an industry we will meet this challenge.” Dr. Moody, a nurse educator herself, said, “The private/public partnership that is being formed today to support graduate nursing education in Tennessee is one of the most significant actions that will positively impact health care throughout the state, as the lack of nurse faculty with graduate degrees is one of the most significant obstacles that schools of nursing encounter when attempting to increase their enrollments.”

### **Funding Proposed to Head Off Texas Nurse Shortage**

A recent spate of studies and reports paints a grim picture of the nursing shortage Texas faces now and will continue to face in the future as baby boomers age. Governor Rick Perry (R) has responded to these reports and to their attendant recommendations for nursing education appropriations to boost enrollment and to raise nurse faculty salaries. In mid-February, he announced a comprehensive higher education funding package that includes a \$56.8 million initiative to pilot non-traditional programs to train nurses at hospitals, and \$16.8 million in grants for creative ways to educate, recruit, and retain nursing students and faculty.

One of the recent workforce studies – conducted by the Texas Department of State Health Services – found that, unless there is a “major intervention” to increase supply or decrease demand, the state could be short 71,000 nurses by 2020. The study cites the cause of the shortage not only being the aging nursing work force, but also the impending retirement of 70 percent of nursing faculty in the next five to 15 years. The report recommends that the Texas legislature direct \$52

million in new funds to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to increase the number of faculty and students in nursing programs. It also recommends that the legislature provide for salary increases for nursing faculty.

According to another study, this one by Texas State University, Texas will need 138,000 new nurses in the next seven to 10 years. In contrast to that number, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reported that the number of nursing students enrolled in Texas undergraduate and graduate programs in 2003-04 was 2,529. Furthermore, state officials reported that more than 11,000 qualified applications were turned away in 2005, largely because of faculty shortages.

A third study – this one from the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston – found that Texas has only 609 nurses for every 100,000 residents (the national average is 782). And finally, an aggressive report from the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce said that the state must quadruple its number of nursing graduates by 2020 in order to meet the expected 86 percent increase in demand by that date.

### **PA Governor Announces Investment to Add Nurses, Improve Nurse Education**

Governor Edward G. Rendell (D) recently announced the investment of \$3.6 million to help increase the number of nurses in Pennsylvania by expanding opportunities for nurse education across the state. In his announcement, he stated that "Investing in education and expanding our capacity to train new nurses is one way we can ensure that residents have access to quality health care now and in the future."

Thirty-eight grant recipients will use \$2.9 million to expand clinical education capacity for training nurses and \$683,659 to support Pennsylvania's Loaned Faculty Initiative. Combined with at least \$2.3 million in private-sector matching funds, the total investment for these projects is nearly \$6 million.

The Loaned Faculty Initiative supports partnerships between health care employers and

nursing education programs to add faculty and increase student enrollment. The grants provide financial incentives to health care employers to lend qualified nurses as faculty to nursing programs that demonstrate a critical need for new faculty to expand their enrollment.

Clinical Education Grants foster the effective use of adjunct, part-time and contracted faculty. They help to increase educational quality and enable institutions to expand their programs by providing faculty coordination and training services. This initiative also enables nursing programs to hire one faculty member dedicated to incorporating simulation technology into the curriculum. The purpose of the program is to provide the most productive and efficient use of simulation labs and increase the number of students nursing programs can enroll.

The grants are part of a \$7.5 million fund set aside in the 2006-07 state budget targeted specifically at reducing the state's nursing shortage.

### **Maryland Health Panel Awards Grants to Target Nursing Shortages**

A portion of a state increase in hospital rates will be used to help ease Maryland's shortage of nurses. In its second round of funding, the Health Services Cost Review Commission recently awarded nine grants for \$5.9 million over the next five years to regional colleges and universities. The money will be used to create partnerships with local hospitals, clinics and health systems to address nursing shortages. The program could produce at least 1,500 nurse graduates over the next five years.

Last year, a survey released by the Maryland Hospital Association reported a 10 percent vacancy rate for registered nurses in 2005. Although the numbers were better than the 2001 numbers, the survey showed hospitals were short 1,700 nurses and the Maryland health care industry reported a gap of 6,000 unfilled nurse positions.