



## Where Will You Be on November 7? The Voting Power of One

In 1998, only 36.4 percent of voters went to the polls to cast their ballots. That is the lowest voter turnout since 1942! Two out of three Americans – 115 million eligible voters – simply stayed home and did not vote at all. Many people explain their failure to vote by saying: “I’m just one person. My little old vote doesn’t make a difference.” There is a lot of historical evidence to the contrary.

- ★ In 1999, Leslie Byrne was elected to the Virginia Senate by 37 votes, less than *one vote per precinct*.
- ★ Donald Sherwood was elected to the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania by a margin of 515 votes, less than *one vote per precinct* making this election the closest House of Representatives race in 1998.
- ★ Loretta Sanchez was elected to Congress from California by less than *four votes per precinct* in 1996.
- ★ Kent Conrad was elected to the US Senate from North Dakota in 1986 by less than *two votes per precinct*.
- ★ John F. Kennedy’s margin of victory over Richard Nixon in 1960 was less than *one vote per precinct*.

(Thanks to the League of Women Voters for making the case so succinctly on their website.)

## Be Informed!

Before going to the voting booth on November 7, make sure you know the candidates’ positions. The NLN’s Public Policy Action Center contains a comprehensive resource specifically designed to meet all your election 2006 needs. From detailed candidate bios to information about specific ballot initiatives to help in locating polling sites, all this can be found under the

“Elections & Candidates” tab on the homepage of the [Public Policy Action Center](#).

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The features include:

- ★ ZIP code and address-to-district matching for a list of congressional, statewide, and state legislature candidates. (Cont’d page 2)

## Nurse Shortage Drives Move to Lift Georgia's Ban on New Nursing Schools

Nearly one year ago, the Georgia Board of Nursing established a moratorium on all new nursing schools. The reason for the moratorium was to ease the less publicized health care workforce shortage that is exacerbating Georgia's severe nursing shortage – a lack of nurse educators. According to the board, if new nurse training programs were approved, there would not be enough faculty to staff them. And, with efforts to recruit more faculty thwarted by low salaries, the board saw no other option. Now, however, increasing objections to the nursing school freeze – many from nurse-depleted hospitals and technical schools – are building momentum to have the ban lifted.

Pointing to a report issued earlier this year by the Georgia Board of Regents that placed the number of new and replacement RNs needed annually over the next six years at 3,100 and the number of RNs Georgia's colleges can produce during that time at 2,000, critics are calling the freeze puzzling and counterproductive. Other supply and demand figures cited include: 20,000 RNs needed in Georgia by 2012; and 4,000 qualified applicants who could not enroll last fall because of facility and faculty constraints.

One of the most vocal critics of the freeze has been Gwinnett Technical College, which is located in one of Georgia's fastest growing counties where the hospital system has 150 nursing vacancies. Gwinnett wants to create a two-year program to train at least 60 RNs, but – despite strong support for such a program by the county's hospital system – has been turned down six times. Recent action

taken to tackle the problem indicates that the objections have been heard. On August 25, the Georgia Hospital Association held a meeting with Abel Ortiz, Governor Sonny Perdue's (R) health policy adviser, members of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, the board of regents, and the nursing board. The result of that meeting is a task force focused on relieving the faculty shortage.

The task force is expected to take up the issue of low faculty pay – thought to be the major reason that 10 percent of the nurse faculty positions remain vacant within the Georgia university system.\* Whether additional money to boost salaries comes from the budgets of the University System or the Department of Technical and Adult Education, or is requested from the legislature, the task force aims to have its recommendations ready when the General Assembly convenes next year.

Other strategies to relieve the faculty shortage will also be considered. They could include increasing the 20-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio in the classroom, and examining how hospitals and colleges can form stronger partnerships – a move that could open up more clinical space where student nurses can do on-the-job training.

\* The NLN's fall survey, in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation, is examining Workload, Compensation, and Teaching Practices. It is open to ALL nurse faculty and administrators employed in prelicensure or graduate-level RN programs. To take the ANONYMOUS survey, [click here](#).

### **Be Informed!** (Cont'd from page 1)

- ★ Candidate biographical and contact information.
- ★ Candidate position statements.
- ★ Statewide ballot initiative information.
- ★ Voter guide information including key dates and deadlines, ID needed at the polls, and links to voting machine descriptions and polling locations.

Try It Today!