

## NLN Advocates for Substantial Increase in Title VIII Funding

In letters dated March 30, 2005, the NLN urged the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees with authority over Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs – to ensure that these programs are funded at a minimum level of \$210 million for FY 2006. As NLN’s CEO Dr. Ruth Corcoran stated, “To put this funding request into perspective, in 1974, during the last serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today’s dollars that would equate to \$592 million, approximately four times what the federal government is spending now.”

Dr. Corcoran noted that today’s nursing shortage is very real and very different from any experienced in the past. “The current shortage is evidenced by an aging workforce and

an inadequate number of people entering the profession. Schools of nursing are suffering from a continuing and growing shortage of faculty, which prevents these institutions from admitting many qualified students who are applying to their programs.”

A recent NLN survey shows that tens of thousands of qualified applicants, represented by an estimated 125,000 applications, were turned away of nursing programs at all levels for the academic year 2003-2004 because of the faculty shortage. The NLN’s Board of Governors will be carrying this message to Capitol Hill when they meet in Washington in mid-May.

A copy of the letter can be accessed via the homepage of NLN’s Public Policy Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/nln/home/>.

## ANSR Alliance Releases Consensus Document



From the left, NLN Board members Elaine Tagliareni and Betty Adams, Representative Carolyn McCartney (D-NY), President Joyce Murray, and Treasurer Peggy Miller.

At an early March 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 Adequate Supply of Nurses*. 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-eight 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.

## \$90 Million California Nurse Education Initiative Announced

Expressing appreciation for the nursing profession, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) on April 13 announced a new \$90 million, five-year nurse education initiative intended to ease the state's nursing shortage by increasing the number of student slots available at community colleges. The state's funding, which is in addition to the \$13 million that was granted last month for nurse training, will come from the **Workforce Investment Act** – federal dollars designated for employee training. Community colleges and private organizations will share the cost of the program equally with the state.

Currently, California has 14,000 vacancies for RNs statewide. An estimated 9,500 new nurses are needed each year to meet growing demand, but California schools graduate only 6,000 nurses a year. Nursing schools are full to capacity, have long waiting lists, and turn away about 40% of qualified applicants. To address this situation, the new program

will use the \$90 million to: expand public college nursing programs; **recruit more qualified instructors**; develop new paths to nursing careers through high school and college nursing academies and apprenticeships; encourage schools and health facilities to create joint education programs; and seek additional funds for nurse education from the federal government and other funding sources.

Along with the California Hospital Association, the community college and public college networks support the initiative. The California Nurses Association (CNA) said it supported funding the expansion of nursing education, but via a bill that provides \$45 million over two years, rather than the Governor's initiative. Schwarzenegger has been embroiled in a legal battle with CNA over the state's nurse-to-patient ratio law, but he insisted that his new initiative has nothing to do with that dispute.

## Bill Provides \$20 Million to Curb Arizona's Nursing Shortage

As in other states, Arizona has no shortage of people who want to be nurses, but rather an inadequate capacity to educate those who apply. Every year hundreds of qualified students have to wait for months before they can enroll in nursing programs. A state lawmaker wants to fix the problem by providing \$20 million over the next five years to help get more nursing students into school without being stuck on a waiting list. The goal of Senate Bill 1294 is to double the number of nursing graduates in Arizona by 2010. "These are difficult times, but I don't think there is anything more serious than getting the funding for this program," said Senator Carolyn Allen (R-Scottsdale), the bill's sponsor.

Allen's bill would spend \$4 million a year for five years for salaries, benefits, training, and other operational costs. The funds, which would come from the state's General Fund, would also **increase the roster of teachers at community colleges and universities**. The request for \$20

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## Bill Provides \$20 Million to Curb Arizona's Nursing Shortage (cont'd)

million will have to contend with many other bills and programs looking for state money in the annual budget battle. With Arizona's burgeoning population, the state's nursing shortage is projected to increase to 25 percent in 2010, however, and many believe that the time is right for Senate Bill 1294.

### Florida Lawmakers Tackle Nursing Shortage

**F**lorida will need at least 8,000 new nurses next year to replace those who are quitting, moving, or retiring and to accommodate the expected growth in the number of people who will need nursing care in hospitals and doctors' offices. Yet, according to the Florida Center for Nursing, a body set up by lawmakers to study the problem, the number of new nurses will be fewer than 4,000.

With its fast growth and large numbers of retirees, Florida's demand for nurses is higher than just about anywhere. In fact, short staffing has been one of Florida's biggest health-care problems for years, and the problem is only expected to get worse. According to federal projections, the nation could be 750,000 nurses short of what it needs by 2020, and a retirement haven such as Florida would be on the front edge of that shortfall.

A Florida House committee studying the issue, trying to figure out how to get people into the field of nursing, has not found a lack of people willing to apply. The problem is not enough room in nursing schools. The primary reason for that situation is not enough people willing to teach – those qualified to teach nursing can earn much higher salaries working as clinicians. The Legislature's auditing

arm recently surveyed nurses about what would make them consider going into teaching. "Across the board, the main thing was getting salary and benefits increased," said Jane Fletcher, the staff member who directed the survey. In an attempt to help, the House Colleges and Universities Committee recently **approved a measure aimed at making the teaching profession more attractive**. The Legislature already had created a program to help nurses pay their student loans, and the committee's bill would expand that program to include loan repayment help to those who want to teach. The measure also creates a grant program to help university programs expand. The intent is for schools to use the money to increase the number of nurses they graduate, and one way to accomplish that would be to pay teachers more.

Ultimately, though, the Legislature cannot do much to affect teacher pay in nursing schools. As committee chair David Meador (R-Lake Mary) noted, the Legislature can give the universities more money, but it cannot dictate how the money will be spent. The push for more pay would have to come from the State Board of Governors or the individual universities. Hopefully, Meador added, they recognize the need.

### Shorts . . .

#### New York

Several bills have been introduced to create incentive programs for nursing faculty enrolled in higher education. The programs would provide monetary awards for nursing educators who agree to teach in New York nursing schools for a contracted amount of time.

#### Vermont

A bill introduced in the House asked for the establishment of an education loan forgiveness program for expenses related to advanced degrees of nurses serving on the faculty of selected state colleges and universities.