



**National League  
for Nursing**



# **PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA 2009-2010**

***Promoting  
excellence  
in nursing  
education  
to build a  
strong and  
diverse  
nursing  
workforce***



**D**edicated to excellence in nursing and preparing the nursing workforce to meet the needs of our diverse populations, the **National League for Nursing** is the premier organization representing all types of nursing education programs — doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, associate degree, diploma, and licensed practical. With more than 1,200 nursing school and health care agency members; 30,000 individual members comprising nurses, educators, administrators, public members; and 18 regional constituent leagues, the NLN is a powerful voice for public policy.

Implicit in the National League for Nursing's core values of *caring, integrity, diversity,* and *excellence* is civic engagement in shaping public policies that affect everyone's quality of health and care.

#### **The NLN's 2009 – 2010 Public Policy agenda:**

- ★ Articulates priority issues addressed by the NLN
- ★ Informs members and colleague organizations, the public, government officials, and the media about the NLN's public policy interests
- ★ Provides a framework for the NLN's analysis and synthesis of developments that influence public policy

### **Government Affairs at the NLN**

**C**ollaboration creates meaningful differences. NLN members seek partnerships with legislators and regulators who value the health of our country. The elected board of governors and board Public Policy Committee are responsible for the oversight of the NLN's government affairs activities. The National League for Nursing understands the nation's health demands and our complicated economic environment. Therefore, in 2009-2010, the NLN will respond to health system reforms by emphasizing the following high-priority infrastructure determinants:

**Quality Health Care for All**

**Ethnic/Cultural/Gender Diversity**

**Nurse Workforce Development**

**The Nurse Faculty Shortage**



# Public Policy Agenda 2009-2010

## Quality Health Care for All

**F**undamental to the nursing profession and integral to the NLN's core values is the principle that all individuals must have equitable access to comprehensive health care services addressing all medical conditions, including mental disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, and addictions. In 2008, even before the rapidly increasing unemployment rate, a staggering 46 million-plus people in our communities lacked health insurance, and millions more had inadequate coverage.

Deficiencies in coverage affect basic health, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and chronic disease management. In assessing health systems for measures such as access and quality of care, the World Health Organization placed the United States 37th in a world ranking of nations. Where health is fundamental to the country's stability and advancement, disparities in health care delivery and in health outcomes are a matter of social and economic consequence, as reinforced by the overwhelming body of health research. The NLN is committed to the principle that everyone in the nation must have access to a health home for health promotion, basic care, and non-urgent medical needs.

**In 2009-2010, the NLN community of nurse educator-scholars and researchers will:**

- ★ Support maximizing education funding for health care professionals who commit to practice in underserved areas.
- ★ Advocate for funding for health care worker education that meets the challenges of our diverse, ever-changing health care environment, e.g., geriatric and culturally competent care.
- ★ Promote national access to primary care through the enhancement of services by local community health centers and neighborhood clinics.
- ★ Advocate for increased funding for the continuum of preventive health care education – “womb to tomb.”
- ★ Support public initiatives providing affordable health insurance for the uninsured and underinsured as well as SCHIP for children.

## Ethnic/Cultural/Gender Diversity

**O**ur nation is enriched by cultural complexity; 34 percent of our population identifies as racial and ethnic minorities. Yet ethnic/cultural/gender diversity eludes the nurse and nurse educator workforce. The NLN survey for the 2006-2007 academic year reported minorities at 24 percent and males at 12 percent of nursing undergraduates. Nurse faculty also lag behind the rest of academe in racial and ethnic diversity; just 7 percent are African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American, compared to 16 percent minority representation among faculty generally. Ninety-six percent of nurse educators are women, and the majority of educators are at least 55 years old with the expectation of retiring in the coming decade.

Besides representing an untapped talent to remedy the nationwide nursing shortage, ethnic/cultural/gender-diverse minorities in nursing are essential to developing a health care system that

understands and addresses the needs of our rapidly diversifying population. Workforce diversity is especially needed where research indicates that factors such as biases and stereotyping, communication barriers, limited cultural sensitivity and competence, and system and organizational determinants contribute to health care disparities.

**In 2009-2010, the NLN will:**

- ★ Support government efforts, such as Title VII - Health Professions, to promote greater ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity and minority representation among nurses and nurse educators.
- ★ Call on Congress to expand investment in resources that enrich cultural competency education and services.
- ★ Support policy initiatives on nurse workforce data collection and analysis.

## **Nurse Workforce Development**

**H** **health disparities**, inflated costs, and poor quality of health care outcomes are deepening because of today's shortfall of appropriately prepared registered nurses (RNs). At 2.9 million strong, RNs are the primary professionals of quality health care delivery in the nation. Yet, the nursing shortage is affecting communities across the nation, including at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which is the largest employer of RNs in the United States — 43,000 in 2007. While maintaining the nurse workforce at the VA, is critical to the care of our nation's growing veteran population, studies have shown that VA medical centers face significant hurdles in recruiting and retaining RNs. And the situation is expected to worsen with projected nurse retirements.

At 10 years and counting, the nursing shortage is outpacing the level of federal resources allocated by Congress to help alleviate the situation. Appropriations for nursing education, such as the Title VIII - Nursing Workforce Development Programs, are inconsistent with the health care reality facing our nation. Insufficient federal investments will diminish human resource development, a shortsighted course of action that potentially further jeopardizes access to and the quality of the nation's delivery of health care.



**In 2009-2010, the NLN will:**

- ★ Endorse evidence-based policy strategies for health care capacity building, such as the Title VIII programs for recruiting and retaining students in the nursing profession.
- ★ Advocate for increased funding for Title VIII - Nursing Workforce Development Programs to strengthen cost-effective initiatives that address health care workforce development challenges, including support for academic and professional progression for all nurses regardless of their points of entry.
- ★ Support policy initiatives that advance best practices to establish an infrastructure of appropriately prepared nurses who can respond to the nation's evolving health care demands.

## The Nurse Faculty Shortage

**A**chieving health system reform goals will pivot on investing in the education of a 21st-century health care workforce. However, as the United States grapples with the workforce shortage plaguing the health care system, nursing programs across the country are rejecting qualified student candidates because there are not enough faculty to teach them. In 2006, nurse faculty vacancies continued to grow with a 7.9 percent vacancy rate in baccalaureate and higher degree programs, and a 5.6 percent vacancy rate in associate degree programs.

NLN research on America's estimated 32,000 nurse educators shows that a core cause of the shortage is an aging and overworked faculty who earn less than nurses entering clinical practice and less than holders of advanced degrees in other academic disciplines. (Nurse educators earn only 76 percent of what colleagues in other academic disciplines do.) 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. More than half of those who plan to leave their jobs within the coming year cited "more compensation" as their primary reason for departure.

Essential to effective nursing care is the educator's scholarship. Critical to enhancing research within the nursing profession is infrastructure development that increases the pool of nurse investigators and nurse educators, expands programs to develop partnerships between research-intensive environments and smaller colleges and universities, and promotes career development for nurse-minority researchers.

### In 2009-2010, the NLN will:

- ★ Support policy incentives that will provide nursing education programs with the necessary faculty to educate the next generation of nurses.
- ★ Champion governmental efforts promoting nursing education as an advanced practice role.
- ★ Advocate for funding to expand nurse faculty education programs that enhance continuous development of faculty as educator-scholars.
- ★ Promote teaching scholarship by advocating for funding for research initiatives in the science of nursing education.





**National League**  
*for Nursing*

***The Voice for Nursing Education***

**For additional information  
please contact:**

**National League *for* Nursing**

6534 Marlo Drive  
Falls Church, Virginia 22042  
703-241-3947, phone  
703-534-9036, fax  
kream@nlm.org

**National Headquarters**  
**National League *for* Nursing**

61 Broadway  
New York, New York 10006  
800-669-1656, phone  
212-812-0393, fax  
communications@nlm.org

**[www.nlm.org](http://www.nlm.org)**