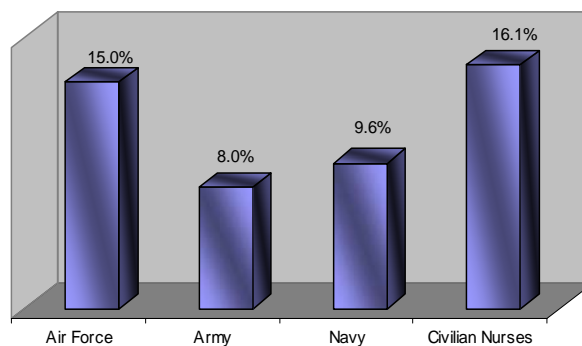


First noted in 1998, our nation continues to face a nursing shortage unprecedented in its depth and duration. Unfortunately, the shortage is expected to worsen in the coming years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that more than 1.2 million new and replacement nurses will be needed by 2014.

Yet, the nursing shortage is not only affecting civilian health care facilities. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have made the need for qualified nurses in military health care facilities more crucial. Much like the civilian sector, the military is also facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining nurses. Neither the Army nor the Air Force has met its active service nurse recruitment goals since the 1990s. In 2006, the Air Force, Army, and Navy experienced overall nurse vacancy rates of 15 percent, 8 percent, and 9.6 percent respectively. In order to address the current shortage, all branches of the military are offering incentives to nurses to encourage them to join the Armed Services. However, the ability to increase the supply of nurses in both the civilian and military sector has been inhibited by the inability to increase student capacity in nursing schools.

Vacancy Rates for Armed Services Nurses and Civilian Nurses



Armed Services Nurse Vacancy Rate: Electronic Mail Communications from the Branches of the Armed Services  
Civilian Nurse Vacancy Rate: Bernard Hodes Group, 2005

At a time when there is such a tremendous need for RNs, our schools of nursing are forced to turn away thousands of qualified applicants each year. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's report on *2006-2007 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 42,866 qualified applicants in 2006. Almost three quarters (71.0 percent) of the nursing schools responding to the 2006 survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into nursing programs.

### The Durbin Troops-to-Nurse-Teachers Program (TNT)

The TNT program, offers one solution to address this shortage. Modeled after the successful 1994 Department of Defense (DOD) program called Troops to Teachers, the goal of the four-pronged program is to increase the number of nurse faculty members so schools of nursing may expand enrollments and alleviate the ongoing shortage.

#### Fellowship Program

- **Option 1:** Commissioned officers with a graduate degree in nursing, serving as a nurse officer in a branch of the Armed Forces would be permitted to serve a two-year tour of duty as a full-time faculty member at an accredited school of nursing. In exchange for this non-salaried instructor, the school agrees to provide ROTC type scholarships for nursing students who will complete a degree in nursing.
- **Option 2:** Commissioned officers with a graduate degree in nursing, serving as a nurse officer in a branch of the Armed Forces would be permitted to serve a two-year tour of duty as a full-time faculty member at an accredited school of nursing. In exchange for this tour of duty, the nurse will pledge to serve an additional four years in the military.

#### Scholarship Program

- Commissioned officers who have served at least 20 years on active duty as a nurse and are eligible for retirement would be eligible for a scholarship to attend an accredited school of nursing with the intent of becoming nurse faculty members. These individuals would undertake activities deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Defense to encourage current and prospective nurses to pursue a career in the Nurse Corp.

#### Transitional Assistance Program

- For commissioned officers of the Nurse Corps who have served at least 20 years and who are already qualified to teach, would be provided transitional assistance to expedite their transition into faculty positions. This includes career placement assistance, transitional stipends, and continuing education.

#### Retired Nurse Officer Program

- Retired Nurse Corps officers appointed as a full-time faculty at accredited school of nursing would receive their full retired pay, a salary commensurate with that received by similarly situated faculty members at the same college or university, and a stipend from their service department at DOD equal to the difference between their faculty salary and what they would receive as base pay if they were on active duty.

*The Troops to Nurse Teachers program is currently cosponsored by Senators: Joe Biden (D-DE), Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), James Inhofe (R-OK), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), and Jack Reed (D-RI).*