Take Advantage of the August Congressional Recess

AACN’s Department of Government Affairs has developed a resource for its members to maximize advocacy efforts during the August Congressional recess. This slideshow presentation provides background and context on recent activity in the federal budget process including the potential impact of sequestration on nursing programs, AACN-related talking points, as well as other important initiatives. Be sure to review this information if you plan to visit with your members of Congress while they are back in your home district.

To view this presentation, see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/12AugustRecess.pdf](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/12AugustRecess.pdf).

AACN Tells NPR that Nation Needs More Nursing Faculty

During a recent interview with National Public Radio (NPR), AACN’s Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Dr. Geraldine “Polly” Bednash emphasized the rising concern over faculty vacancies in nursing schools across the country and the consequences on the nursing workforce pipeline. According to AACN data, 75,587 qualified applicants were turned away from our nation’s nursing schools in 2011 due primarily to lack of faculty, presenting a bleak reality in the face of healthcare system transformations expected to dramatically increase the demand for nursing services. Dr. Bednash attests to nursing’s aging workforce population and how many of these nurses—including faculty members—anticipate retirement in the near future.

“We have nurses in their 70s who are working, and many of those individuals are working for a temporary period of time to get themselves through this financial crunch—and they are going to leave in droves and are already leaving in some places where the economy is getting better.”

Dr. Dorrie Fontaine, Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia, describes the upcoming challenge her school faces in light of recent faculty retirements. In addition to recruiting new faculty to replace those retired, she recognizes the importance of developing a culturally-competent nursing workforce.

"We want to have our faculty and students match the population we serve,’’ Fontaine says, "so we do not have enough Hispanic nurses or faculty, as well as African-Americans and other minorities – and men!'’

According to AACN’s Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions released in September 2011, the national nurse faculty vacancy rate in baccalaureate and graduate degree schools of nursing was reported at 7.7 percent. Of the
survey’s reported 1,088 vacancies, 91.4 percent were positions requiring or preferring a doctoral degree. One contributing factor that deters some from serving as faculty is the comparatively lower salary in nursing academia to the practitioner field.

The nursing workforce will continue to require federal support for programs to educate and train a greater number of nurse faculty to prepare a nursing workforce that can absorb the anticipated additional 32 million newly insured Americans in the coming years.

To read more about the demand for nursing faculty on NPR’s Health Blog, visit:
http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/08/03/156213925/nursing-schools-brace-for-faculty-shortage

To listen to the full interview, see:
http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=156213925&m=157958488

Continuing Resolution Agreement Reached

On July 31, 2012, House and Senate leadership announced an agreement on a six-month continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government through March 2013 thereby avoiding a potential government shut-down. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) revealed the CR would continue to fund government operations at a level of $1.047 trillion, which is consistent with the level outlined in the Budget Control Act of 2011, and is above the Fiscal Year 2012 level ($1.043 trillion). The CR does not relieve the federal budget from the impending sequester scheduled to take effect beginning January 2, 2013. Additionally, Congress has yet to vote on this spending package, which is expected to be taken up in early fall. There is some controversy over whether the length of the CR is too long and if the cuts are steep enough.

For more information on AACN’s appropriations advocacy, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/appropriations.

Efforts to Protect Against Sequestration Continue

In last month’s edition of Policy Beat, AACN reported that the association signed a letter in support of protecting non-defense discretionary funding (NDD) from impending sequestration. The letter, drafted by the Coalition for Health Funding (http://publichealthfunding.org/) calls for a bi-partisan, balanced-approach to the sequester’s across-the-board cuts mandated through the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 starting January 2, 2013. NDD funding provides federal dollars for programs that support our nation’s educators, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, environmentalists, and medical researchers, as well as other public personnel who contribute to the health and safety of the nation. BCA calls for half of the total reduction in discretionary spending to come from defense and half from non-defense, despite the fact that NDD’s total funding allocation is significantly less than the total funding allocated for defense. According to varying sources, the sequester could make an indiscriminate cut of 7.8 percent to as high as 14 percent to all discretionary spending. The letter emphasizes that if the President and Congress are unable to reach an agreement before sequestration takes effect, NDD funding will be cut by as much as 20 percent by 2021. Nearly 3,000 national, state, and local organizations signed the letter http://publichealthfunding.org/uploads/NDDLetter.Final.July2012.pdf).

On July 25, the NDD community held a Rally to Restore Balance on Capitol Hill. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (LHHS-ED), and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Ranking Member of the House LHHS-ED Subcommittee Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Representative George Miller (D-CA), and Mayor of Phoenix Greg Stanton addressed the nearly 200 individuals who showed their support for a bi-partisan, balanced solution to crafting the federal budgets priorities.
As members of Congress travel home to meet with constituents during the August Congressional recess, it remains imperative that the public continue to inform their legislators of the devastating impact sequestration would pose for the economy and the public’s well-being. An NDD Grassroots Toolkit is available for individuals and organizations wishing to take an active role in educating Congress and the public about the importance of NDD programs and their impact on society. The toolkit includes a video presentation about the advocate’s role, tips for communicating with legislators and the media, and frequently asked questions about sequestration.

To access the toolkit, visit: http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/grassroots_toolkit_coming_soon/

**Fisher vs. University of Texas: AACN Weighs In**

Earlier this month, AACN signed on to an Association of American Medical Colleges Amicus Brief in support of the University of Texas at Austin’s capacity to include race as a determinant in the admissions selection process. The University is seeking to maintain the right to exercise their current selection process, which considers a wide range of factors. The case refers back to the Supreme Court’s 2003 decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* whereby the Court ruled in favor of the University of Michigan Law School’s consideration of race in its admissions policies in order to bolster racial and ethnic diversity.

The brief portrays the importance of creating a multicultural student body as it is important to ensuring a diverse future healthcare workforce. Given the gaps in healthcare inequalities and the expanded coverage to millions of Americans, organizations in support of the brief recognize that building a diverse workforce begins with higher education. Included in the brief, AACN contends that “Nursing programs across the country have also placed greater importance on educating a culturally competent workforce. The objective is to educate and train students to provide patient-centered care that identifies, respects, and addresses differences in patients’ values, preferences, and expressed needs.”

The case is scheduled for opening hearings before the Supreme Court October 10, 2012.

To view additional coverage on Fisher vs. University of Texas, see: http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/fisher-v-university-of-texas-at-austin/.

**AENT Award Announcement Delay**

It is AACN’s understanding that Health Resources and Services Administration Division of Nursing intends to announce the award recipients of the Advanced Education Nursing Traineeship (AENT) (Title VIII of the *Public Health Service Act*) at the end of this month.

**Funding Opportunity: AHRQ Post-Doctoral Fellowship Awards**

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has announced the postdoctoral fellowship award to support postdoctoral applicants exhibiting qualification to become independent research investigators. Funds will be distributed through the Individual Postdoctoral National Research Service Award (NRSA) grant mechanism. Priority will be granted to eligible individuals or institutions who strive to investigate improvements in healthcare delivery, safety, and patient outcomes. The proposed postdoctoral training should align with AHRQ’s mission to “improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.”

For further details on this funding opportunity, including eligibility and submission deadlines, visit: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-12-261.html.
PCORI Welcomes Public Comment on Methodology Report

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Board of Governors approved the first draft of the PCORI Methodology Report on May 21, 2012. The report, entitled “Our Questions, Our Decision: Standards for Patient-centered Outcomes Research,” presents 60 new guidelines to direct this innovative research. The recommendations provide direction for components of the research process identified by the PCORI Methodology Committee, which included a wide range of topics from choosing a research question to implementing the results into practice. PCORI welcomes public input and the report will be open for comment until September 14, 2012.

For more information on the Methodology Report, or to submit a comment, see:
http://www.pcori.org/what-we-do/methodology/

PCORI was established through the Affordable Care Act to help America’s patients and their families make informed healthcare decisions and improve healthcare delivery and outcomes. For more information on PCORI, see:
http://www.pcori.org/

HHS Hosts Webinars on ACA

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships is hosting two national Webinars this month on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its impact on communities. The first Webinar will be held on August 21 to review www.HealthCare.gov, a Web site tool to assist the public in navigating ACA provisions and implementation. The second Webinar, which will be hosted on August 28, will provide a general overview of ACA in the Spanish language. Both Webinars will include a question and answer session with HHS staff. Anyone wishing to submit a question to either webinar should email ACA101@hhs.gov.

For more information about the Webinars, including registration, visit:
http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/resources/aca_101-invite.html

For more information about the Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships and its efforts surrounding the ACA, visit: http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/

AHRQ’s National Advisory Council Meeting Summary Available

Summary of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s National Advisory Council’s July 13, 2012 meeting is now available. AHRQ’s mission is to “improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. As one of 12 agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, AHRQ supports research that helps people make more informed decisions and improves the quality of health care services.” A panel comprised of 21 healthcare experts, the National Advisory Council provides recommendations and guidance for AHRQ’s Director and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

To access slide presentations from the meeting, visit: http://www.ahrq.gov/about/nac2012/nac0712/

HRSA Workforce Diversity Summit Now Available via Webinar

Hosted by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Health Professions, Division of Nursing, “Nursing in 3-D” workforce diversity summit will gather workforce experts, nursing leaders, and diversity stakeholders to examine the social, economic, political, and environmental impacts of diversity patient outcomes and
health disparities. The summit is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis, and will be held from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm on August 16, 2012, and from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm on August 17, 2012 in Bethesda, MD. Individuals wishing to participate but who cannot attend in person may access the event via webinar by visiting https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/nursing3d/. Please note that Webinar spots are limited to 500. Viewing will take place on a first come, first serve basis.

The Webinar will also be archived for later viewing at: http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/index.html.

**Calling Nominations for the 2012 AACN Policy Luminary Award**

Granted annually to an exceptional nursing leader in the realm of public policy, the AACN Policy Luminary Award highlights the achievements and contributions made by this individual to the advancement of the nursing profession. Initiated in 2009, the Policy Luminary Award has been received by Dr. Mary Wakefield, Administrator of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, Dr. Mary Naylor, Marian S. Ware Professor in Gerontology at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of New Courtland Center for Transitions and Health, and, most recently, Dr. Ellen-Marie Whelan, Senior Advisor at the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation.

AACN’s Government Affairs Committee is seeking nominations for this year’s award, which will be presented at the AACN 2012 Fall Semiannual Meeting. Each nomination package should include two letters of recommendation from peers, the nominee’s CV, and a one page bio-sketch. Nominations are due Monday, September 17, 2012, by 5pm E.T.

For more information on the Policy Luminary Award, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/membership/awards/CallforNomPolicy.pdf

**Sponsor the 2013 AACN Student Policy Summit!**

The fourth annual Student Policy Summit will be held March 17-19, 2013 in Washington, DC. The Summit is open to baccalaureate and graduate students of AACN member schools who desire to gain a more in-depth understanding about the legislative process and nursing’s role in healthcare policy. Summit sponsorship ensures that the cost of attending the Summit is affordable for all students, and that the Summit is a highly rewarding experience.

The 2012 Summit was a great success due largely in part to the generous support of its sponsors. In attendance were over 100 students who represented 41 schools across 23 states. Summit attendees were provided a rich experience that included discussion sessions with leadership from federal departments and agencies, as well as the opportunity to meet with members of Congress and their staff to discuss issues relating to nursing education, research, and policy.

Based on level of sponsorship, institutions that choose to sponsor have the opportunity to have their name and logo featured on Summit materials. Higher levels of sponsorship cover the cost of registration for a limited number of students awarded on a merit-basis. Sponsorship opportunities are limited and are granted on a first-come, first-serve basis. To view sponsorship packages for the 2013 Summit, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/SPSSponsorPackages.pdf.

For more information on the 2013 Student Policy Summit, including registration, visit: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/events/2013/03/17/student-policy-summit