AACN Launches the Congressional Connection: 535 Project

AACN is pleased to launch our newest grassroots initiative – the Congressional Connection: 535 Project. In 2014, AACN will embark on a strategic advocacy initiative to have meaningful conversations with all 535 Members of Congress and their staff. By connecting with members of Congress through AACN’s fall and spring Advocacy Days, Action Alerts, and government affairs staff, we will work to educate policy makers on our association’s priorities for nursing and healthcare education, research, and practice. Our Grassroots Network, which is comprised of over 10,000 AACN member deans, faculty, students, and community stakeholders, will be essential as we begin this exciting program to propel nursing to the forefront of the federal legislative landscape.

Through the network, AACN stakeholders can stay informed on key issues and make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and in their home districts. For more information, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/take-action. One of the first opportunities for members to engage is participating in AACN’s Virtual Advocacy Day.

Only Six Days’ Until AACN’s Virtual Advocacy Day

AACN will be hosting its spring virtual advocacy day on Monday, March 24, 2014 in conjunction with AACN’s Hill Day during the Spring Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Your support is critical to ensuring that nursing’s voice has a formidable presence in the federal policy making arena. Members of AACN’s Grassroots Network will be invited to send a message to their federal legislators requesting their support for funding priorities impacting nursing education, research, and practice in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, as well as pressing policy initiatives.

To join AACN’s Grassroots Network, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/take-action. AACN appreciates all that our members do to support programs and legislation that advance our profession and the health of our patients. For more information on the talking points for the Virtual Advocacy Day message, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/advocacy-day

AACN Responds to the President’s FY 2015 Budget

On Tuesday, March 4, 2014, the President released his FY 2015 budget recommendations outlining the Administration’s funding priorities. Some of the highlights included $77.1 billion for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and $30.2 billion for the National Institute of Health, both receiving increases over FY 2014 levels. Over the course of the week, more details were released providing insights on programs of specific interest to AACN members. The Obama Administration recommended level funding for the Nursing Workforce Development
programs (Title VIII, Public Health Service Act) at $223.841 million, and near level funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research at $140.452 million. In AACN’s press release issued on March 7, 2014, the organization expressed concern over the President’s FY 2015 Budget recommendations, which may impact the nation’s future supply of registered nurses.

AACN recognizes that difficult choices must be made as the Administration works to implement a reformed healthcare delivery system. The organization commends the investments made to strengthen the health professions workforce through the National Health Service Corps and the commitment to team-based care through the new Clinical Training in Interprofessional Practice program. However, the barriers AACN members face to increasing student capacity cannot be overcome without the support the Title VIII programs have provided.

While AACN is concerned about the level funding proposed for nursing education and research, the association is pleased to see that the President’s budget is recommending $5.4 billion (over 10 years) to extend reimbursement to states for primary care services and, most significantly, to expand the eligibility of this payment to nurse practitioners and physician assistants. AACN has advocated for this policy change along with our colleagues in the advanced practice nursing community since the Medicaid Primary Care Payment was created.

This fiscal year, AACN and the Nursing Community, a coalition of 60 national nursing organizations, will advocate for $251 million for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs, $150 million for NINR, and $20 million for the Nurse-Managed Health Clinics (NMHCs). These requests reflect the vital importance of supporting our profession in the education, research, and practice arenas, and how this support directly translates to improvements in care delivery in a changing healthcare landscape. The role of NMHCs in this effort will be highlighted at the National Nursing Centers Consortium’s (NNCC) upcoming conference Nurse Managed Health Centers: Turning the Affordable Care Act into Action on June 9, 2014, in Alexandria, VA. The conference invites “Leaders in the field of nurse-led care from across the country and across the industry are invited to attend, share their innovations, and network with their peers.” For more information, including how to register for the conference, visit: https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/?eventid=1467180.

Over the course of this appropriations process, AACN will keep our members apprised of the progress and opportunities to impact the federal spending discussion.

For more specific information on the President’s Department of Health and Human Services Budget, see: www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/health.pdf.

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

**FTC Releases New Policy Paper on APRN Scope of Practice Laws**

Earlier this month, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released a policy paper titled, *Policy Perspectives: Competition and the Regulation of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses*. In their release of the document on March 7, 2014, the FTC notes, “By limiting the range of services APRNs may provide and the extent to which they can practice independently, such proposals may reduce competition that benefits consumers. Even well-intentioned laws and regulations may impose unnecessary, unintended, or overbroad restrictions on competition, thereby depriving health care consumers of the benefits of vigorous competition.” For more information on the release, see: http://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2014/03/ftc-staff-paper-state-legislators-should-carefully-evaluate.

AACN has commended the work of the FTC as it investigates the anti-competitive nature of state laws and regulations that inhibit APRNs from practicing to the full extent of their education and training. AACN has been
tracking letters sent to state legislators since 2010, and in 2012 wrote to FTC Chairman Leibowitz expressing our appreciation for their review of recent state legislation that involves the potential for anticompetitive behavior in the healthcare field. To read some of FTC’s work in this area, see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/aprn-advocacy/federal-trade-commission](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/aprn-advocacy/federal-trade-commission)


### FTC to Host Workshop on Healthcare Competition and Present at AACN’s Spring Meeting

On March 20-21, 2014, the FTC will host a workshop *Examining U.S. Health Care Competition*. Over the course of the two days, a robust slate of experts will discuss issues that impact U.S. healthcare competition. Of particular interest to AACN and its members is a session titled *Professional Regulation of Healthcare Providers*. Among other presenters, this panel discussion will feature Joanne Spetz, PhD, Professor at the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies and Associate Director of Research Strategy at the Center for the Health Professions at the University of California, San Francisco and Barbara J. Safriet, JD, LLM, Visiting Professor of Health Law at Lewis and Clark Law School. Other sessions will focus on healthcare innovation and advancements in healthcare technology. For more information, see: [http://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2014/02/ftc-host-public-workshop-examining-us-health-care-competition](http://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2014/02/ftc-host-public-workshop-examining-us-health-care-competition).

**Dr. Anita Hufft, Dean of the College of Nursing at Valdosta State University**, and new elected AACN Board Member, will represent the association at the meeting.

Additionally, AACN is delighted that Dan Gilman, JD, PhD, Attorney Advisor in the FTC’s Office of Policy Planning, will join member deans for a conversation during the Spring Meeting. Dr. Gilman will discuss the FTC’s role in protecting consumer safety, informing consumers and state legislatures, and promoting competition in health care. He will share highlights of the above mentioned FTC report and the public workshop.

### AACN Supports DME Legislation

Last month, AACN supported legislation introduced by Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) that would authorize certain providers who are not currently captured in statute to document the face-to-face encounters with their Medicare patients for the purpose of ordering certain types of durable medical equipment (DME). Currently, the Affordable Care Act [P.L. 111-148] requires a physician’s signature certifying that a face-to-face encounter with a healthcare provider has occurred within six months of ordering DME. Without a physician’s signature, beneficiaries cannot receive DME services, despite having met the face-to-face requirement. This contradicts national efforts to improve the safety, efficacy, and cost of care delivery. Given that APRNs already perform face-to-face encounters, H.R. 3833 would simply allow these providers to sign a form certifying that they have interacted face-to-face within the six-month time period. AACN is working with our APRN colleagues to garner support for this important legislation. For more information, see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/support-legislation](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/support-legislation)

### AACN’s Advocacy at Work for You

AACN has created a new resource for deans, faculty, and students to understand the full breath of services and opportunities the association provides its members. AACN is committed to preparing the next generation of nursing advocates who can purposefully and effectively contribute to shaping public policy at the national, state, and local levels. This brochure highlights opportunities to ensure that students, faculty, and nursing stakeholders are well prepared to engage in the policymaking process. For more information, see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/AACN-Advocacy-Brochure.pdf](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/AACN-Advocacy-Brochure.pdf)