AACN’s 535 Project – The Congressional Connection
Update: Contact Made in all 50 States!

AACN’s 535 Project: The Congressional Connection is a strategic initiative to have meaningful conversations with all 535 Members of Congress and their staff. Through AACN member interaction and staff visits, we will work to educate policy makers on the future of nursing education, research, and practice and the current priorities in these areas.

Update
AACN has now reached legislators from all 50 states! Since the launch of the 535 Project on March 20, 2014, AACN members and staff have contacted 272 Members of Congress and their staff regarding AACN’s priorities and programs of interest. In the House of Representatives, 308 contacts have been made with 179 legislators, representing 41.15% of Representatives. In the Senate, 359 contacts have been made with 93 legislators, representing 93% of Senators. Republicans represent 50.4% of those contacted; Democrats 48.9%; and Independents 0.7%.

Current issues of interest being discussed with legislators and their staff include the Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act), support for nursing research, including the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), and legislation that supports advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). To join the Grassroots Network, please use the subscription form here. For more information on AACN’s legislative and policy priorities, see: Supported Legislation and Policy Briefs.

AACN August Recess Toolkit: Maximizing Advocacy While Your Members Are Back Home

As Members of Congress are back in their home districts during the August Congressional Recess, AACN encourages its members to contact their legislators to continue advocating for nursing education, research, and practice. This year, August Recess will conclude September 7, at which time Members of Congress will return to our nation’s capital to address priorities leading up to the midterm election season. AACN’s Maximizing Advocacy During the August Congressional Recess: A Toolkit for Engagement includes resources for AACN members on how to advance advocacy efforts while legislators are engaging with constituents in their states. Consider inviting your Member of Congress to tour your school to meet with your faculty and students, or visit them in their offices to discuss your needs. The toolkit presentation includes information on AACN’s suggested talking points, including:

- The importance of continued support for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs in their 50th year of success
How nursing research contributes to improved patient outcomes and the role of the National Institute of Nursing Research in supporting this endeavor

Supporting the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) proposal to APRNs full practice authority in VHA facilities

Opportunities to co-sponsor AACN supported legislation surrounding APRN practice

Joining the House or Senate Nursing Caucus

AACN staff have also created a webinar detailing how deans, faculty, and students can take action during the August Recess. Titled, “August Recess: What to Know While your Members of Congress are Back Home,” this webinar originally aired on July 23 and is available for archived viewing by registering here.

AACN Applauds Legislation to Support Continued Funding for Biomedical Research

On August 20, 2014, AACN sent a letter of support to Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) for introducing the Accelerating Biomedical Research Act (S. 2658). The legislation, which was introduced on July 24, prioritizes funding to sustain the field of healthcare research that is essential toward improving the quality and quantity of patients’ lives. The bill proposes to ensure that federal support for NIH is preserved when the current fiscal climate is imposing debilitating cuts to the research community. More specifically, S. 2658 would make budget cap adjustments to allow appropriators to restore investment in NIH through fiscal year 2021, the last fiscal year to fall under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) [P.L. 112-25]. The bill also includes $29.9 billion (the level NIH received for FY 2014) in base funding and would call upon appropriators to increase that amount through FY 2021. This mechanism would help elevate NIH’s budget to restore purchasing power lost to budget caps through the BCA.

In a recent press release, Senator Harkin, who serves as Chair of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS-ED) Appropriations Subcommittee, stated, “This is life-saving medical research that is giving hope to tens of millions of Americans suffering from chronic disease or living with a disability.” United in this effort with the research community, AACN continues to advocate for federal entities—including NIH—that support the advancement of research that improve health and wellness.

For the full text of the Accelerating Biomedical Research Act, click here.

Read Senator Harkin’s press release on S. 2658.

Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations Update

On July 24, the Senate Appropriations Committee released its LHHS-ED fiscal year 2015 draft spending bill and report language.

With regard to the Nursing Workforce Development programs, the bill recommends $236.294 million in FY 2015 (an increase of $12.453 million or 5.56% over FY 2014). Additionally, the subcommittee recognizes the importance of Nurse-Managed Health Clinics, and in its report language states that “no less than $5,000,000 be awarded to nurse-managed health centers.” The funding for these sites would be allocated through the Title VIII Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention Program, to which the subcommittee includes nearly $2 million more for FY 2015.

Additionally, the draft legislation allocates $30.459 billion for NIH and of this, $142.209 million for NINR ($1.692 million more than the FY 2014 level). These funding levels demonstrate the subcommittee’s recognition of the importance of preserving investments in the healthcare workforce when federal dollars are scarce. AACN will continue to keep you apprised as the appropriation process unfolds. The current fiscal year ends on September 30, 2014, by which time Congress must pass a spending package. For more details about specific AACN programs of

Recently, the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) submitted to President Barack Obama its most recent report, *Better Health Care and Lower Costs: Accelerating Improvement through Systems Engineering*. The report comes in light of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which aims to increase access to health care by offering affordable insurance to all Americans. To ensure the health care our nation is receiving is not only affordable but of the highest quality, PCAST members worked to analyze the various components that contribute to this endeavor. Council members brought forth a comprehensive list of suggested actions that will help to enhance health care in our nation, as well as pointed out areas of resistance. AACN member Heather Young, PhD, RN, FAAN, Dean and Professor of the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at the University of California, Davis is a member of the PCAST Systems Engineering in Health Care Working Group.

The report’s recommendations included seven points that would allow the Administration to have the biggest impact on improving the quality of health care:

- Accelerate the alignment of payment incentives and reported information with better outcomes for individuals and populations.
- Accelerate efforts to develop the nation’s health-data infrastructure.
- Provide national leadership in systems engineering by increasing the supply of data available to benchmark performance, understand a community's health, and examine broader regional or national trends.
- Increase technical assistance (for a defined period—3-5 years) to health-care professionals and communities in applying systems approaches.
- Support efforts to engage communities in systematic healthcare improvement.
- Establish awards, challenges, and prizes to promote the use of systems methods and tools in health care.
- Build competencies and workforce for redesigning health care.

In addition to the above recommendations, the council suggests strengthening the pipeline of healthcare professionals training in systems engineering methods through the collaboration of professional societies and organizations like the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, Association of American Medical Colleges, and American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

In summary, the report discusses strategies and provides suggestions that have the potential to improve efficiency, reliability, and quality of healthcare delivery as the Administration proceeds with the ACA.

To read the report please visit: [http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1889028&resultClick=3](http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1889028&resultClick=3).

Title VIII Programs Celebrate 50th Anniversary Next Month

On September 4, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Nurse Training Act (P.L. 88-851) into law recognizing nursing education programs under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act. This historic legislation created what is today the largest dedicated source of federal funding for nursing education. Next month will mark the 50th year of Title VIII programs and their work to support hundreds of thousands of nursing students, faculty,
practicing nurses, and academic institutions over the past five decades. In light of their monumental success, AACN, along with other national nursing organizations comprising the Nursing Community coalition, will be hosting an event on September 8 in Washington, DC. A briefing and reception on Capitol Hill will provide nursing representatives the opportunity to engage with Members of Congress and their staff on how these programs have and continue to play a critical role in bolstering the nursing pipeline as well as to ensuring patients across the country have access to high-quality providers.

During AACN’s Fall Semiannual Meeting, AACN will host a virtual advocacy day on Monday, October 27, and a call to action will ask member deans/directors and AACN’s Grassroots Network to contact their legislators about continued support for Title VIII. Stay tuned for more details surrounding this advocacy opportunity in the September issue of Policy Beat.

For more information about the Nursing Workforce Development programs, including a historical overview and funding, see AACN’s “Celebrating 50 Years of Success: Nursing Workforce Development Programs” brochure.

PCORI Releases New Funding Announcements

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) has released six funding announcements that will be available through two new rounds of funding. PCORI was created to identify and disseminate research that helps patients and their families better understand and the choices they make about their health. The funding announcements are based on PCORI’s National Priorities for Research and Research Agenda, which guides the institute’s comparative effectiveness research.

The first five research proposal calls are as follows:

- Assessment of Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment Options;
- Improving Healthcare Systems;
- Communication and Dissemination of Research;
- Addressing Disparities;
- Improving Methods for Conducting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research.

Letters of Intent are due by 5:00pm ET on September 5, 2014, and the announcements are competitive, so only full applications will be requested for those proposals selected by reviewers.

The sixth funding announcement is a call for large pragmatic clinical studies proposals which compare alternatives for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, or management of a disease or symptom; improving healthcare system-level approaches to managing care; or addressing health or healthcare disparities. Letters of Intent for these projects are due by 5:00pm ET on October 1, 2014.

PCORI’s website contains more information about the funding announcements, guidelines for projects, and applicant resources for each opportunity. In addition, potential applicants may be interested in a blog post by PCORI Chief Science Officer Bryan Luce, PhD, MBA, in which he provides guidance on potential projects and the types of research these announcements seek to fund.