Register Now! AACN Webinar on Maximizing Advocacy During the August Congressional Recess

While Members of Congress head back to their home states during the August Congressional recess, AACN members can continue strong advocacy efforts to advance nursing education, research, and practice. Register now for the webinar *August Recess: What to Know While Your Members of Congress are Back Home* to learn how you can maximize your communication with legislators and their staff. AACN’s Associate Director of Government Affairs Lauren Inouye will provide insight on how deans/directors, faculty, and students from member institutions can take full advantage of this scheduled recess and ensure that nursing’s voice continues to be heard.

The webinar will be held on Wednesday, July 23, 2014 from 2:00-3:00pm ET. Click [here to register](#).

**AACN’s 535 Project: The Congressional Connection**

**About the 535 Project**
Congressional Connection is a strategic initiative to have meaningful conversations with 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.

**Update**
Since the launch of the 535 Project on March 20, 2014, AACN members and staff have contacted 255 Members of Congress and their staff regarding AACN’s priorities and programs of interest. In the House of Representatives, 298 contacts have been made with 171 legislators, representing 39.3% of Representatives. In the Senate, 346 contacts have been made with 84 legislators, representing 84% of Senators.

Currently, legislators from 49 states have been contacted, split evenly down party lines. Republicans represent 49.4% of those contacted; Democrats 49.4%; and Independents 0.8%.

For more information on AACN’s grassroots initiatives, or to join the Grassroots Network, visit [our website](#).
AACN Supports Legislation that Increases Access to APRN Practice

AACN, along with its colleagues in the advanced practice registered nursing (APRN) community, are expressing support for bills that would help ensure patients receive high-quality care in a timely manner.

**Improving Access to Maternity Care Act of 2014 (H.R. 4385)**

On July 10, 2014, AACN sent letters to Representatives Michael Burgess (R-TX) and Lois Capps (D-CA) applauding the introduction of the Improving Access to Maternity Care Act of 2014 (H.R. 4385). The bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to ensure that women and newborns living in regions experiencing a lack of maternity care providers have access to the full spectrum of maternity services. More specifically, H.R. 4385 would create a maternity Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation. HPSAs currently recognize shortages in primary care, dental care, and mental healthcare providers, but not within maternity care. H.R. 4385 would allow the Department of Health and Human Services to address this provider shortage by placing eligible clinicians who provide the maternity care services (pre-to post-natal) participating in the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program into these high-need areas. The legislation would help mitigate the demand for high-quality maternity health professionals in these underserved populations.

**Protect Patient Access and Promote Hospital Efficiency Act (H.R. 4663)**

AACN also sent letters of support to Representatives Diane Black (R-TN) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) for introducing the Protect Patient Access and Promote Hospital Efficiency Act (H.R. 4663), which would allow certain APRNs (nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, and clinical nurse specialists) and physician assistants (PAs) to sign for the certification of healthcare services to be received during an inpatient stay. Currently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services require a two-step process (admission and certification of inpatient services) for a patient to be admitted to the hospital. While APRNs and PAs may be allowed to sign paperwork related to the admission of a patient, they are not allowed to sign for the certification of services to be received during hospitalization. H.R. 4663 would amend the Social Security Act to authorize these APRNs and PAs to certify inpatient services without also seeking a physician signature. AACN supports H.R. 4663 as it encourages APRNs to continue to practice to the full extent of their education and training and would help to streamline the patient admission process by removing this burdensome hurdle.

For more information, please visit: [AACN Supported Legislation](#).

**AACN Attends HHS Advisory Committee on Minority Health Meeting**

On July 8-9, 2014, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Office of Minority Health](#) (OMH) held an Advisory Committee meeting in Washington, DC. AACN attended the two-day meeting which centered around the committee’s priorities for implementing initiatives aimed at addressing health disparities among minority populations in America. Committee members representing a broad range of health professions, including nursing, strategized how to best utilize resources to promote the work of HHS and other agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. OMH is tasked with addressing disease prevention, health promotion, risk reduction, healthier lifestyle choices, use of healthcare services, and barriers to health care. The Office also:

1. Promotes the collection of health data by racial, ethnic, and primary language categories and strengthening infrastructures for data collection, reporting, and sharing;
2. Works to increase awareness of the major health problems of racial and ethnic minorities and factors that influence health;
3. Establishes and strengthens networks, coalitions, and partnerships to identify and solve health problems;
4. Develops and promotes policies, programs, and practices to eliminate health disparities and achieve health equity;
5. Fosters research, demonstrations, scientific investigations, and evaluations aimed at improving health;
6. Funds demonstration programs that can inform health policy and the effectiveness of strategies for improving health.

More information on specific OMH programs can be found here.

**AACN Develops New Policy Brief on Nursing Student Diversity**

The Changing Landscape: Nursing Student Diversity on the Rise examines trends in diversity over time, by program level, and across the country, as well as details about AACN’s work to promote a diverse nursing workforce, such as advocacy around the Nursing Workforce Diversity programs. The number of minority students in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs continues to increase. Baccalaureate and graduate nursing students show consistent diversity across all levels of education. Over 30% of students at each level represent minority populations. Male students made up approximately 11% of the baccalaureate and graduate nursing students in 2013. In 2004, this proportion was 9%.

To view other policy briefs on education, research and practice, see: [AACN Policy Briefs](#).

**Call for Applications: GNSA Policy Committee**

The Graduate Nursing Student Academy (GNSA) is pleased to announce a call for applications for the GNSA Policy Committee. This select group of graduate students will receive support to become highly-skilled advocates and learn about the essential tools for effective advocacy at the local, state, and national levels. Additionally, members of the GNSA Policy Committee will offer insight to AACN on policy issues of importance to graduate nursing students. Through participation in this committee, members will have an opportunity to serve in a leadership role, enhance their professional development, and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective policy and advocacy leaders for nursing. The GNSA Policy Committee will consist of four GNSA members who will serve no more than two, one-year terms.

Graduate nursing students interested in applying for the GNSA Policy Committee must meet the following criteria:
- Be a member of GNSA. (Membership is free. [Click here](#) to sign up.)
- Be able to participate in quarterly conference calls during the year for 1 – 2 hours

Application details can be found online: [www.aacn.nche.edu/students/gnsa/policy-committee-application](#).

The submission deadline for the application is **Friday, August 22, 2014 by 5:00 pm ET**. Selections for the GNSA Policy Committee will be announced in September. For questions, contact AACN’s Associate Director of Student Initiatives Marta Wall at [mwall@aacn.nche.edu](mailto:mwall@aacn.nche.edu) or AACN’s Associate Director of Government Affairs Lauren Inouye at [linouye@aacn.nche.edu](mailto:linouye@aacn.nche.edu).
PCORI Webinar Highlights Opportunities for Nurses

On June 12, 2014, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) hosted a webinar titled *PCORI in Practice: Highlighting Opportunities for Nurses*. The webinar featured PCORI’s nursing leadership, including Debra Barksdale, PhD, RN, Member of the PCORI Board of Governors; Robin Newhouse, PhD, RN, Chair of the PCORI Methodology Committee; and Amanda L. Greene, PhD, MPH, MSN, RN, Senior Program Officer of Research Integration and Evaluation, as well as Kathleen Delaney, PhD, PMH-NP, FAAN, Principal Investigator of a PCORI Funded grant, *CAPE: Patient-Centered Quality Assessment of Psychiatric Inpatient Environments*.

The webinar provided an overview of PCORI and its work, as well as an outline of the Methodology Standards and their importance in guiding the institute’s research. The speakers encouraged nurses to submit research proposals answering PCORI’s mission for consideration, and highlighted several studies led by nurses currently being funded by PCORI. In addition, nurses can serve with PCORI through other avenues, including Advisory Panels and Merit Review Panels. To view an archived version of the webinar, visit: [http://encore.meetingbridge.com/MB005418/140612/](http://encore.meetingbridge.com/MB005418/140612/).

MedPAC Submits Comments Concerning ACOs

Last month, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) submitted comments to CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner regarding the Accountable Care Organization (ACO) model, and highlighted issues MedPAC perceived to be essential to a successful program. MedPAC suggests that CMS consider how quality measurement and evaluation of ACOs can be simplified, as well as improving provider engagement with beneficiaries. Additionally, MedPAC recommends statutory language surrounding the definition of an “ACO professional” when assigning Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries to an ACO to allow nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and physician assistants to be considered for when “claims for primary care services attributable to the ACO were computed for attribution.” For more information on Accountable Care Organizations, visit [ACO General Information](http://www.medpac.gov).

Hearing Examines Delivery of Scientific Cures

On July 9, 2014, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing titled “21st Century Cures: Modernizing Clinical Trials” as part of the Committee’s 21st Century Cures Initiative. This initiative is aimed at ensuring patients have timely and appropriate access to curative therapies by closing the gap between the science and discovery of cures and the regulation of their delivery. Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) and Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) are collaborating to foster an environment where the U.S. can become the healthcare innovation capital of the world. The Committee will work with the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and other agencies to promote the discovery, development, and delivery process of scientific cures. To view a recording of the hearing “21st Century Cures: Modernizing Clinical Trials,” click [here](http://www.medpac.gov).

The National Prevention Council’s 2014 Annual Status Report

The HHS National Prevention Council’s 2014 National Prevention Strategy Annual Status Report is now available to the public. Chaired by Acting Surgeon General Boris Lushniak, the National Prevention Council released this report which outlines the council’s successes toward implementing the National Prevention Strategy to increase the number of Americans living healthy lives. The National Prevention Strategy, which was first released June 16, 2011, “aims to guide our nation in the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being. The Strategy prioritizes prevention by integrating recommendations and actions across multiple settings to improve health and save lives.” The National Prevention Council is tasked with achieving this goal through the expertise of 20 federal departments and agencies.