Dr. Mary Wakefield Receives First AACN Policy Luminary Award

AACN was pleased to present the first AACN Policy Luminary Award to Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) on Monday, November 2, 2009. The award was presented to Dr. Wakefield in honor of her outstanding and career-long dedication to advancing nursing and health policy by AACN President Dr. Fay Raines at the AACN Fall Meeting.

Throughout nursing’s long history, there have been many well known and often celebrated nurses who have truly changed the world. In honor of AACN’s 40th Anniversary Celebration, the Board of Directors established the Policy Luminary Award to recognize the outstanding public policy contributions of nurse leaders. Dr. Wakefield’s career has made innumerable contributions by way of public policy to advance the nursing profession and our nation’s health. Currently, as the Administrator of HRSA, Dr. Wakefield’s presence at the national level illustrates that nurses are leaders in the healthcare arena, and their expertise is critical to ongoing discussions around healthcare reform. During her presentation, Dr. Wakefield noted that AACN was an incredible influence in helping to establish nursing policy at the national level.

In addition to serving as the Administrator of HRSA, Dr. Wakefield has had a distinguished career serving as the Chief of Staff for two United States’ Senators—Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Quentin Burdick (D-ND); as the associate dean for rural health at the University of North Dakota; as director of the Center for Health Policy, Research and Ethics at George Mason University; on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission; as chair of the National Advisory Council for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; as a member of President Clinton's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry; and as a member of the National Advisory Committee to HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy.

The criteria for the Policy Luminary Award were established by AACN’s Government Affairs Committee and approved by the Board of Directors to annually recognize an outstanding registered nurse and nursing leader for his or her public policy achievements at the AACN Fall Meeting. Awardees must meet at least two of the following criteria: demonstrated...
policy leadership at the national level; recognized for academic leadership in nursing and/or healthcare policy; contributed to the field of scholarly research in nursing and/or healthcare policy; advanced public policy initiatives at the national level; elevated the image of nursing in the national or state policy arena; translated nursing research into national legislation or public policy; demonstrated expertise in regulatory issues impacting nursing or nursing education; promoted state initiatives that paved the way for national policy achievements.

The call for nominations for this prestigious award will open in the spring of 2010 and the membership will have about six months to suggest candidates. Nomination materials must include two letters of recommendation from peers, the nominee’s CV, and a one-page bio of the nominee. The AACN Government Affairs Committee will review the nominations and select a recipient based on the criteria and present the candidate to the Board of Directors for endorsement.

**House and Senate Appropriations Update**

The FY 2010 Appropriations process was finalized in Congress on Sunday, December 13, 2009 when the Senate passed the FY 2010 consolidated appropriations bill. The bill awaits President Obama’s signature and includes spending for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies programs. As AACN reported on December 9, the Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) will receive $243.87 million in FY 2010, marking a $72.84 million increase over the FY 2009 funding level. This is the highest allocation for the Title VIII Programs since their inception in 1964, and is a timely development as the nation moves closer to healthcare reform.

For funding information on AACN federal programs of interest see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/FY2010FundingChart.pdf](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/FY2010FundingChart.pdf)

Over the last two months, AACN has been engaged in discussions around FY 2011 Appropriations. The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research has met twice to determine the best strategy for sustaining and increasing funding at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The research community is still working to develop a final request. In early November, the Nursing Community met to begin discussions around the FY 2011 appropriations request for Title VIII. The ad hoc forum of professional nursing organizations will meet again in January to determine the collective request for Title VIII and the collaborative advocacy strategy.

For more information about the Nursing Community see: [http://thenursingcommunity.org/](http://thenursingcommunity.org/)

**Healthcare Reform Update**

**While AACN supports many provisions in the current healthcare reform proposals circulating, AACN is a nonpartisan organization and does not take an official stance on the entirety of any one bill or proposal. The information below provides both an overview of current activities at the federal level and AACN’s position on specific provisions.**

Presently, the Senate is deeply involved in discussions related to healthcare reform as the debate continues on the Senate floor. Senator Lieberman (I-CT) indicated that he would be inclined to vote in
favor of the healthcare reform bill if the public option and Medicare buy-in proposals are removed from the legislation. Sen. Lieberman’s supportive position would give the Senate the 60 votes needed to pass healthcare reform. The next step in the process would be for the House and Senate to designate a Conference Committee to negotiate the differences between the two bills.

AACN remains dedicated to advocating for the critical nursing provisions we have supported through several versions of the legislation. The Nursing Community is currently working on a letter to the healthcare reform Conference Committee of Senators and Representatives. Among the many provisions included in this letter are those related to expanded and revised Title VIII authorities, the ability of nurse practitioners to lead the medical home, provisions to expand the public health workforce, and transitional care models. Additionally, AACN, our colleagues at AARP, and the Nursing Community continue to support the inclusion of the Medicare Graduate Nursing Education demonstration program presently included in the Senate healthcare reform legislation. We are hopeful that the current limited scope of the demonstration program will be expanded. The legislation currently reads that only five hospitals will be able to access the demonstration funds. For more information on these and other provisions in healthcare reform supported by AACN, see http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/HCRReform.pdf

The President would like to see the healthcare reform bill pass the Senate before they adjourn for the holiday recess. As Congress continues to debate and deliberate healthcare reform, AACN will keep you apprised of important information on this issue. For more information on healthcare reform and the proposals discussed above, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/npb.htm

**AACN’s 2010 Legislative Agenda**

Next month, AACN’s Government Affairs Committee will begin to finalize the 2010 Legislative Agenda for the organization. AACN’s Board of Directors will then vote to approve the agenda in February. Top priorities for the organization will continue to be:

- Addressing the nurse faculty shortage and nursing school capacity barriers
- Funding for nursing education and in particular nursing research
- The role of nursing in healthcare reform
- Developing nursing leaders in policy, legislation, and regulation

To view last year’s legislative agenda: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/Goals09.pdf
Preparing for H1N1

AACN was invited to take part in a nationwide conference call with Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on December 9, 2009. During the course of the call the Secretary and other leaders from HHS expressed the need for organizations such as AACN to support a campaign to encourage clinicians as well as patients to get the H1N1 influenza vaccine.

Barriers to early access, such as vaccine shortages, have eased. As of December 9, as many as 86 million doses had been made available to the public. Misinformation regarding the safety and necessity of the vaccine is of concern to HHS, and in an effort to address these challenges, AACN has joined dozens of other organizations in encouraging the widespread use of the vaccine among clinicians and patients by signing on to an “Open Letter to the American People.” This letter, and other information regarding the seasonal influenza and H1N1 vaccines can be accessed at www.flu.gov.

AACN Student Policy Summit Hotel Rooms Now Available

AACN is thrilled to be hosting our first Student Policy Summit at the Spring Annual Meeting. The summit is open to baccalaureate and graduate students from AACN member institutions, and will take place in Washington, DC from March 21-23, 2010. Participants will hear from national nursing policy leaders, Congressional Hill staff, and premier nurse researchers. Most importantly, students will have the opportunity to advocate for nursing education at the federal level by visiting their members of Congress. The Policy Summit will prove to be a beneficial networking and learning experience for students. More information on the schedule and registration process will be available in early 2010.

Plan to apply for AACN’s scholarship that will cover the cost of registration, airfare, and hotel accommodations for one stellar nursing student deeply interested in healthcare policy.

A small hotel room block for the AACN Student Policy Summit is available now. Students can make reservations at the Washington Marriott located at 1221 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC for $179 a night. Book rooms early to reserve this great rate by calling 1-800-228-9290. The hotel is located just a few blocks from the Fairmont Washington, DC where most of the Summit activities will take place.

Know a Nursing Student Interested in Policy?

Encourage them to register for the event and sign up for AACN’s grassroots network at: http://capwiz.com/aacn/mlm/signup/

Additionally, AACN’s Government Affairs department offers unpaid internships throughout the year to interested students from member institutions at our Washington, DC headquarters. Interns receive
hands-on experience in nursing education and research advocacy including covering hearings, attending Nursing Community meetings and events, and participating in activities on Capitol Hill. Consider bringing your passion for nursing advocacy to Washington for a semester. For more information on applying for this opportunity, visit http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/GAInternship.htm.

Happy Holiday’s from AACN’s Government Affairs Staff

As the end of 2009 quickly approaches, the Government Affairs staff at AACN would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of nursing education and research. Federal advocacy relies on power in numbers, and we appreciate your dedication to promoting nursing with a strong unified voice. This year our grassroots network has doubled and continues to grow! Your efforts have helped to secure funding for nursing education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, critical provisions for nursing education and practice in the healthcare reform legislation, and a historic funding level Title VIII in the final FY 2010 consolidated appropriations bill.

From the AACN family to yours, have a safe and happy holiday season!