Healthcare Reform Passes and Signed into Law

On Sunday, March 21, 2010 the House of Representatives held a historic vote on healthcare reform, passing the Senate's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act by a vote of 219-212. This Congressional action sent the bill to the President for his signature and became law on Tuesday, March 23, 2010. While AACN did not take an official stance on this package, the organization supported many provisions that improved nursing education, research, and practice.

The law reauthorizes the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs under the Public Health Service Act, one of AACN's top legislative priorities. These provisions will increase access to the Title VIII programs and strengthen their mission. One of the provisions included, critical to AACN's membership, is the removal of the 10% cap on doctoral education under the Title VIII Advanced Education Nursing program.

Additionally, the law includes a demonstration project to create a Graduate Nursing Education program. This program provides Medicare dollars to support the clinical education of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). AACN has long advocated that APRNs are ideal primary, transitional, and preventive care providers and their education requires a significant investment from the federal government. While AACN supports this provision, the current legislative language dramatically limits the scope to only five hospitals, and staff will work to have this fixed through other legislative vehicles.

AACN was glad to lend our assistance to the efforts of other national nursing organizations that worked to include critical provisions. For example, the American College of Nurse-Midwives advocated tirelessly to expand nurse-midwife reimbursement. The law increases the payment rate for nurse-midwives for covered services from 65% of the rate that would be paid were a physician performing a service to the full rate. The National Nursing Center Consortium, along with the support of AACN and other colleagues in the community, advocated for broader financial support for Nurse-Managed Health Clinics, which serve those who would not otherwise have access to care.

AACN was also pleased to assist our colleagues in the APRN community in securing language in the law that will explicitly prohibit a health plan or insurer from discriminating against healthcare providers with respect to participation and coverage. The law also incorporates nurse home visitation models, transitional care models, and establishes school-based clinics as Federally Qualified Health Centers.

On Sunday, March 21, 2010, the House also passed a reconciliation package that provided amendments to the Senate legislation as well as increased support for the Pell Grant program. This package was taken up by the Senate on March 23, 2010. After revisions to the Pell Grant amendments, the package was passed by the Senate, sent back to the House, passed by the House, and awaits the President’s signature.

For more information on AACN’s efforts during healthcare reform see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/npb.htm
AACN’s First Annual Student Policy Summit

AACN’s inaugural Student Policy Summit, held March 21-23, 2010, was a great success with 135 nursing students from across the country attending. AACN was privileged to have such tremendous partners in the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence (primary sponsor) and the Johnson & Johnson Campaign for Nursing’s Future. The Summit coincided with AACN’s Spring Annual Meeting and featured a variety of plenary speakers, panels, and networking opportunities. The students heard from such distinguished speakers as Dr. Patricia Grady, Director of the National Institute of Nursing Research, Dr. Deborah Trautman, Executive Director of the Center for Health Policy at Johns Hopkins University and former health fellow to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Dr. Kathleen McCauley, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, and Darlene Curley, Executive Director of the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence and former Maine State Legislator. These baccalaureate and graduate nursing students are the first members of AACN’s Student Policy Academy and are nursing’s future policy leaders.

AACN’s Congressional Reception

This spring’s Congressional Reception took place in the Rayburn House Office Building foyer. AACN was delighted to have Representatives from both sides of the aisle join AACN’s members and students for an evening that focused on the important role nursing plays in healthcare. Representatives Lois Capps, RN (D-CA), Steve LaTourette (R-OH), John Dingell (D-MI), Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Ralph Hall (R-TX), and John Barrow (D-GA) spoke with AACN members regarding the importance of collaboration to improve issues facing the nursing profession and healthcare.
AACN Presents Bi-Partisan Congressional Awards

From left: Maria LoGrippo, PhD student, Seton Hall University; Kristen Gutierrez, PhD student, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; Phyllis S. Hansell, Dean and Professor, College of Nursing, Seton Hall University; Congressman LoBiondo; Susan Bakewell-Sachs, Dean and Professor, School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science at The College of New Jersey; Julie Beshore Bliss Chair and Professor, Department of Nursing, HWilliam Paterson UniversityH.

From left: Eileen Zungolo, Dean and Professor, School of Nursing, Duquesne University; Representative Allyson Schwartz; Andrea Hollingsworth, Dean, School of Nursing, Gwynedd-Mercy College; and Patricia Harrington, Chairperson and Professor, Department of Nursing, University of Scranton.

AACN was delighted to honor Representative Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) and Allyson Schwartz (D-PA) with our Congressional Appreciation Award. For the past two years, Representative LoBiondo has served as the Republican co-signer of the House Dear Colleague letter requesting increased funding for the Title VIII programs. He is a member of the House Nursing Caucus and has co-sponsored three major bills AACN has worked to support during this Congress as well as previous Congresses. AACN deans and students from New Jersey met with Representative LoBiondo on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 to honor him for his tremendous efforts.

AACN’s second honoree, Representative Allyson Schwartz (D-PA) consistently supports increased funding for the Title VIII programs, is a member of the House Nursing Caucus, and during the recent healthcare reform discussions championed the nurse practitioner’s role as a primary care provider. Representative Schwartz has also supported the capitation grant legislation for which AACN has advocated. Representative Schwartz attended AACN’s Congressional Reception to receive her award.

Remember to Log Your Capitol Hill Visits

For AACN members and Policy Summit participants, remember to log your Capitol Hill visits! This information helps AACN staff follow-up with Congressional staff to ensure questions are answered and help maintain collaborative relationships with policy makers from both sides of the aisle.

To log your visit see: [http://capwiz.com/aacn/lrm/feedback.tt](http://capwiz.com/aacn/lrm/feedback.tt)
**Work Continues on FY 2011 Appropriations**

AACN works every year to advocate for nursing education funding. For FY 2011, AACN and the Nursing Community are requesting a 10% increase over last year’s level of $243.872 million. To help garner support for this request, Representatives Capps (D-CA) and LoBiondo (R-NJ) circulated a Dear Colleague Letter. Through AACN’s grassroots network, a total of 191 messages were sent to U.S. Representatives requesting their support of Title VIII. The letter closed on Friday, March 19, 2010 with 93 signatures. While this number is lower than previous years, nursing funding was highly supported compared to other programmatic request letters circulated. The major reasons for not signing the FY 2011 Dear Colleague letters were uncertainty about healthcare reform and the tight fiscal climate.

Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) are currently circulating the Senate Dear Colleague letter requesting $267.3 million for the Title VIII programs. AACN is working with our membership and the Nursing Community to ask that Senators sign this important letter, which supports nursing education.

While many of the health and education programs remained level funded, President Obama proposed a 3% increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to keep pace with biomedical inflation. The National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) would also benefit from this increase if Congress decides to enact this level. Due to the current the financial climate, AACN decided to coincide with the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, which is requesting an 8.5% increase for NIH in FY 2011, and propose a 10% increase for NINR. This increase will advance nursing science and help to translate its innovations for quality patient care.

For more information on FY 2011 Appropriations see: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/appropriations.htm](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/appropriations.htm)

**Grant Opportunities and Educational Tools**

The final version of the *Safe Patient Handling Training for Schools of Nursing* has been released by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Publication No.: 2009-127. The material includes a booklet and the safe patient handling and movement web-based training. Users can play the flash media from a computer, print the PDF of the booklet, or download the entire CD contents.

Curriculum for the program was developed in partnership with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the American Nurses Association (ANA). The tools are available at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2009-127/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2009-127/).

**Funding for Psychiatric Nursing Programs**

The Health Resources and Services Administration recently released a grant opportunity eligible to Psychiatric Nursing Programs. “This program addresses the interrelatedness of behavior and health and the critical need for integrated health care services. Grants will be awarded to assist eligible entities in meeting the costs to plan, develop, operate, or maintain graduate psychology doctoral, doctoral internship, and doctoral residency programs accredited by the APA. These programs must foster an integrated approach to health care services and address access for underserved populations by training psychologists to work with underserved populations including children, the elderly, victims of abuse, the chronically ill or disabled; and in areas of emerging needs.”

For more information see: [http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&oppId=52814](http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&oppId=52814)