Equal Time: A Bipartisan Look at State Health Policy

AACN was honored to have John M. Colmers, Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene for the State of Maryland, and William Hazel, MD, Secretary of Health and Human Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia, present at AACN’s Fall Semiannual meeting on October 31, 2010. Secretary Hazel and Secretary Colmers addressed healthcare reform in their respective states and provided AACN members a more detailed understanding of how Republican and Democratic state governments are implementing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Secretary Hazel spoke about how Virginia plans to challenge the ACA, but will continue to move forward with a health reform plan that will best benefit the state’s citizens. Secretary Colmers offered information on Maryland’s Health Care Reform Coordinating Council created through an Executive Order on March 24, 2010 to implement the ACA. Of particular interest to AACN members, both Secretaries addressed the vital role nurse practitioners play in providing primary care.

See photos from AACN’s Fall Meeting at: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Conferences/10FallPhotos.htm

Reminder to Report Your Capitol Hill Visits

Despite the timing of AACN’s Capitol Hill day being so close to the November 2 election, many members made appointments to visit with their Senators and respective Representatives. To date, 48 meetings have been reported! Please remember to log your visits by going to AACN’s government affairs home page where you will find the image to the right or go directly to http://capwiz.com/aacn/lrm/feedback.tt. Thank you for your continued commitment to AACN’s advocacy efforts.
Mary Naylor Awarded AACN’s 2010 Policy Luminary Award

On October 31, 2010, AACN was pleased to award Mary Naylor, PhD, RN, FAAN the Policy Luminary Award, AACN’s highest award for achievements in the public policy arena. Initiated in 2009, the AACN Policy Luminary Award was developed to recognize outstanding nursing leaders for their contributions to healthcare policy. Dr. Naylor’s work to promote transitional care models during healthcare reform, as well as her leadership roles with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Medicare Payment Advisory Commission contributed to her receipt of this award. Dr. Naylor’s efforts to advance the nursing profession in the policy arena are inspiring to nursing leaders and students across the country. At the award ceremony, Dr. Naylor offered remarks to AACN’s membership on the vital role nursing research plays in policy development.

2010 Midterm Elections Add Three Nurses to Congress

During the midterm election, three newly elected nurses will now serve in the House of Representatives. Ann Marie Buerkle (R-NY), Renee Ellmers (R-NC) and Diane Black (R-TN) will begin their term in January when the 112th Congress commences. AACN looks forward to working with these new Representatives and are confident that the experience they have garnered during their nursing careers will prove invaluable as they serve their districts and country.

Ann Marie Buerkle, New York

Having served as an attorney and a registered nurse, Buerkle’s main interests lie in the regulation of government spending and improving the status of the economy. She firmly believes increasing the distribution of tax credits and providing vouchers for parents will allow more fluidity in enrollment, thus increasing competition within the private school sector and improving the education system overall.

Renee Ellmers, North Carolina

Ellmers earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Oakland University and went on to pursue a career as a registered nurse and hospital administrator. The conservative representative believes her stance supporting “free-market-based” policy changes will lower costs, improve technologies, and increase accessibility to health care for more Americans.

Diane Black, Tennessee

Black earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Belmont University. She draws upon experiences in her career as an emergency department nurse when weighing the benefits and drawbacks of the ACA. She believes patients, physicians, and healthcare providers should be the primary decision-makers in the political realm of health care. Black aims to be a key player as the healthcare reform continues to be addressed.
2010 Midterm Election Results and Lame Duck Session

On November 2, 2010, the midterm election results changed the current House of Representative majority from Democrat to Republican. When the 112th Congress begins in January, Republicans will hold 239 seats while Democrats will hold 189 in the House or Representatives. The Senate did not undergo a change in leadership; however, the Democratic majority has narrowed with 51 seats being held by Democratic Senators and 46 by Republican Senators. The Senate announced on November 16, 2010 that they have re-elected their party leaders for the 112th Congress, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Congress returned to a lame duck session on November 15, 2010 to address such issues as the outstanding federal appropriations bills, which must be completed before December 3, 2010 when the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires. There is no confirmation to date regarding the plan for finishing the appropriations bills, but a long-term CR appears likely, which would provide funding to discretionary programs like Title VIII and NINR at the FY 2010 levels.

AACN’s 2011 Student Policy Summit Begins Registration

On November 5, 2010, AACN opened registration for the 2011 Student Policy Summit that will be held March 20-22, 2011 in Washington, DC at the Fairmont Hotel. The maximum number of registrants for the conference is 130 baccalaureate and graduate students from AACN member schools. Currently, registration has reached 33% of full capacity. Students should plan to register early! The Student Policy Summit will offer attendees a three-day immersion into various aspects of health policy as well as the role of nurses in state and federal advocacy. At the conclusion of the event, attendees will be inducted into AACN’s Student Policy Academy. For more information on the Summit, see: http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/sps.htm.

AACN is thrilled to have the event sponsored by the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence and the Johnson and Johnson’s Campaign for Nursing’s Future. Additional sponsorship opportunities are available to schools of nursing and other interested stakeholders. For more information, see:

AACN will also be offering two full scholarships for the event. Students interested in applying for the scholarship are required to provide an essay detailing their interest in nursing and health policy. Applications for the scholarship are due December 17, 2010. For more information, see:

Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence Hosts Nurse Scholars

In concert with AACN’s Fall Semiannual Meeting, the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence offered a conference for their doctoral nurse scholars. The event offered the Jonas Scholars content on nursing leadership, policy, research, and faculty roles from renowned experts in the field. For more information on the Jonas Center, see:
On November 16, 2010, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) formally established the new Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (Innovation Center). Created by the Affordable Care Act, the Innovation Center will examine new ways of delivering health care and paying health care providers that can save money for Medicare and Medicaid while improving the quality of care. CMS also announced the launch of new demonstration projects that will support efforts to better coordinate care and improve health outcomes for patients.

“For too long, health care in the United States has been fragmented—failing to meet patients’ basic needs, and leaving both patients and providers frustrated. Payment systems often fail to reward providers for coordinating care and keeping their patients healthy reinforcing this fragmentation,” said Donald Berwick, M.D., CMS Administrator. “The Innovation Center will be a new, and much needed driver of innovation aimed at improving health care for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. The Center will identify and test care models that provide beneficiaries with a seamless care experience, better health and lower costs,” said Acting Innovation Center Director, Richard Gilfillan, M.D.

The Innovation Center will consult stakeholders across the health care sector including hospitals, doctors, consumers, payers, states, employers, advocates, relevant federal agencies and others to obtain direct input on its operations and to build partnerships with those that interested in its work. The organization will also test models that include establishing an “open innovation community” that serves as an information clearinghouse of best practices in health care innovation. The Center will also work with stakeholders to create learning communities that help other providers rapidly implement these new care models. CMS also announced several new initiatives to strengthen primary care and better coordinate care for patients. New initiatives will test “health home” and “medical home” concepts:

- Eight states have been selected to participate in a demonstration project to evaluate the effectiveness of doctors and other health professionals across the care system working in a more integrated fashion and receiving more coordinated payment from Medicare, Medicaid, and private health plans. Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Michigan, and Minnesota will participate in the Multi-Payer Advanced Primary Care Practice Demonstration that will ultimately include up to approximately 1,200 medical homes serving up to one million Medicare beneficiaries.

- The Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Advanced Primary Care Practice Demonstration will test the effectiveness of doctors and other health professionals working in teams to treat low-income patients at community health centers. The demonstration will be conducted by the Innovation Center in up to 500 FQHCs and provide patient-centered, coordinated care to up to 195,000 people with Medicare.

- A new State plan option under which patients enrolled in Medicaid with at least two chronic conditions can designate a provider as a “health home” that would help coordinate treatments for the patient. States that implement this option will receive enhanced financial resources from the Federal government to support “health homes” in their Medicaid programs.

The Innovation Center also announced an upcoming opportunity for States to apply for contracts to support development of new models aimed at improving care quality, care coordination, cost-effectiveness, and overall experience of beneficiaries who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, also known as “dual eligibles.” The Innovation Center expects to award up to $1 million in design contracts to as many as 15 state programs for this work. More information on the CMMI and these initiatives is available at: [www.innovations.cms.gov](http://www.innovations.cms.gov).