

# National Student Nurses' Association ®

## Guidelines for Planning Legislative Activities

**Legislative Process  
Capital Contacts  
Voter Registration**



**Legislative Terms  
Political Action  
Get Out the Vote**

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# Guidelines for Planning Legislative Activities

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## LEGISLATION: WHY GET INVOLVED?

Events are taking place in Washington, DC, and in your state capital that will affect you as a nursing student and your future as a registered nurse. Government involvement and regulation of health professionals and health care delivery is not new. What is new is the growing political awareness and activism among nurses and nursing students. Today, professionals must be aware of legislative and regulatory activities, be ready to support or oppose in an informed manner, and be prepared to work for the candidate(s) of their choice. Only in this way will nurses become a powerful and influential voice for health care. Nurses and nursing students are realizing that their roles as patient advocates do not end at the bedside, but rather in the voting booth.

Becoming involved with legislative issues is not difficult, but it can be confusing at first. This handbook will help students to better understand the legislative and political process, how it affects nursing, what NSNA®, state and school associations can do, and, most importantly, what you can do.

Many times one person's opinion can make a difference to a legislator. Taking the time to express your views and share your resources with your legislators is helpful to their decision making. Legislators aren't experts on every issue. Even if they are experts, they need to know how their decisions will affect their constituents.

## THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

### National

The diagram on page 18 illustrates the federal legislative process. A bill, or proposed legislation, may originate in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. In this diagram the bill originates in the House. A bill must be passed by both houses of Congress and approved by the President to become law. If the House and Senate pass different versions of the same bill, a conference committee from the two chambers meets to agree on one version. Each chamber must then pass the final version before the bill goes to the president.

There are several points in the legislative process when it is crucial for citizens to express their support or concerns: during committee hearings; immediately before and during consideration of the bill on the floor of the House or Senate; and during conference deliberations. Just prior to the commit-

tee or floor vote is an important time for input because a legislator may or may not have decided on his/her vote and sometimes can still be swayed, particularly if the legislation is controversial.

After a bill has been approved by both the House and Senate in identical form, it goes to the president for signature. If the president approves the legislation, he/she signs it and it becomes law. Or, if the president takes no action for ten days while Congress is in session, a bill automatically becomes law.

The president can also veto a bill if he/she opposes it. If the president takes no action within 10 days after the Congress has adjourned its second session, the effect is a "pocket veto" and the legislation dies. If the president vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two-thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers for a quorum.

*Authorizing Legislation* - provides the legislative authority for a program or action, and indicates the maximum dollar amounts for which it can be funded.

*Appropriations* - provides the actual money to implement the authorizing legislation, but not necessarily up to the dollar limit specified in the authorizing legislation.

Once a bill is signed into law, it will be assigned to the appropriate department of the executive branch that is responsible for developing rules and regulations for the enforcement of the new law. During the rulemaking process, there is always the concern that the proposal may actually change the intent of the original legislation - some see this as part of the checks and balances system. Citizens are again given the opportunity to express their opinions during a period of comment that follows the initial printing of the proposed rules and regulations.

The principal legislative committees for health concerns are:

- Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (Subcommittees on Children and Families, on Employment and Workplace Safety, and on Retirement and Aging).
- Senate Committee on Finance (Subcommittees on Health Care and on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy) - jurisdiction over all matters relating to the Social Security Act (Medicaid, Medicare, Long Term Care, Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, etc.).
- Senate Committee on Appropriations

(Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies).

- House Committee on Education and Labor (Subcommittees on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, on Healthy Families and Communities, and on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness).
- House Committee on Energy and Commerce (Subcommittee on Health).
- House Committee on Ways and Means (Subcommittee on Health).
- House Committee on Appropriations (Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies).

The major department in the executive branch dealing with health concerns is the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS is a complex bureaucracy and includes the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Public Health Service, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The Division of Nursing is part of HRSA.

## State

All states – except for Nebraska – operate with a two-house, or bicameral, legislature. Some states call the houses the Assembly and the Senate, others the House and Senate. Nebraska has a unicameral or single legislative body. In the bicameral system, one house usually carries with it some seniority. Again, in each state, key legislative committees handle health concerns. Your identification of these committees and their membership is essential.

A variety of health policy planning groups operates on the state and local level. These include county and city health boards, the state board of nurse licensure and registration, PRO's (Peer Review Organizations), the governing board of the Health System Agencies and the Statewide Coordinating Council (Health Planning and Resources Development Act of 1974). Nursing input, as students and practitioners, is needed in all of these groups.

## NATIONAL ISSUES

Two pieces of legislation are of continued concern to the nursing profession. Title VIII of the Public Health Services Act – Nursing Workforce Development Programs – is the authorizing legislation that provides essential funds for nursing education, including nursing student loans, traineeships,

nurse practitioner programs, and special projects for nursing, which include funds for innovative nursing practice models in health care settings and creative educational models. It is the basic piece of federal legislation on which nursing education depends. These programs are currently funded at \$149.7 million for FY 2007. In 1974, the federal investment was \$153.6 million in the Title VIII programs. Inflated and adjusted to today's dollars, this appropriation would equal \$634 million, more than four times the FY 2007 appropriation. We can expect to have to continue to work hard to increase the funding for Title VIII.

The appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and related agencies provides the funds for the Title VIII – Nursing Workforce Development Programs. Each year the nursing profession must present a persuasive argument to Congress and the President to convince them of nursing's need for federal funds. This is particularly important because of the increased pressure being placed on lawmakers to balance the federal budget.

Another issue of importance to nursing students at the national level is the repayment of nursing student loans. NSNA ® supports increased collaboration in the collection of these loans in an effort to reduce the current high delinquency rate in repayment by nurses.

## NSNA's ® Legislative Policies

The position of NSNA ® on various pieces of legislation is based on policies adopted by the House of Delegates and Board of Directors. On new issues that arise between meetings, the board members responsible for legislation decide the initial response of NSNA ® based on association policies. An up-to-date list of NSNA ® positions is contained in *Getting the Pieces to Fit*, and is on the NSNA ® web site at [www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org). Some federal initiatives which NSNA ® addresses are:

- Federal funding for basic nursing education as well as graduate education
- Nursing student loan forgiveness
- Direct third-party payment for nursing service
- Nursing shortage
- Increased awareness regarding minimizing exposure to medically generated toxins and other occupational health hazards
- Protection against mandatory overtime
- Healthcare for the uninsured.

## NSNA's ® Legislative Program

A member of the board of directors is responsible

for legislative activities of the association, with the assistance of a staff member. NSNA® headquarters monitors federal legislation and policy making on issues of concern to nursing and health care, and notifies state presidents and legislative chairpersons when action is needed from constituents. Legislative information is communicated to state and school associations through *Imprint*® and the *NSNA News*®. NSNA® maintains close working relationships with the legislative staffs of the American Nurses Association and other organizations. Cooperative efforts are undertaken whenever possible, as legislative strength lies in the number of people you are speaking for.

### **The Legislative Alert**

When quick action is needed on the part of state associations, a legislative alert is sent from NSNA® headquarters via broadcast email. The alert explains the legislation, its implications, and outlines the type of action needed. When a legislative alert is sent, quick response is vital.

## **STATE ISSUES**

There are specific issues that are of particular concern to state associations because they are governed by the state and not the federal government. For example, basic nursing practice is regulated on a state-by-state basis, not by national regulations. The authorizing legislation is the state nurse practice act. This law defines the scope of practice for nursing.

The state nurse practice act can be revised or amended. The amendment may be to your advantage or may jeopardize your position as a student or as a nurse. You should monitor any proposed changes. You must understand the existing act and its implications if you are to react appropriately to any legislation affecting nursing in your state.

State legislation may affect the opening and closing of nursing programs in your state, student financial aid, and many other issues of concern to students.

### **State Associations' Legislative Policies**

Positions of state nursing student associations should be based on decisions made by the state association's House of Delegates and board of directors. The state association should also support national positions whenever possible. We encourage state nursing student legislative directors to use the State Nurses' Association legislative committee chairperson as a resource.

## **State Legislative Programs**

The first step in establishing a state nursing student association legislative program is to have a legislative chairperson and a legislative committee.

The legislative chairperson should be an active NSNA® member with an interest in legislation. The chairperson serves as a direct link with the NSNA® and the state nurses' association, and should be an elected or appointed member of the state student nurses' association board of directors. The chairperson is responsible for coordinating the legislative program and educational activities. A co-chairperson who will serve on the committee during the following year would provide continuity.

The legislative committee is composed of active NSNA® members with an interest in public policy. A representative from each school within the state is recommended. However, do not let incomplete representation block the formation and working of the committee. The committee develops and administers the state legislative program and a variety of educational programs for NSNA® members in that state.

### **Setting Goals and Identifying Issues**

The initial action of the legislative committee is to set goals and objectives for the year. Specific objectives for the committee and for individual members are needed to achieve those goals. For example, education of members regarding legislation would be a goal. What you plan to do to meet that goal comprises your objectives. The objectives must be written in measurable terms, so that an evaluation of the committee's success can be determined at the end of the year.

The next step in establishing a legislative program is to identify the issues or bills with which your association is concerned. Close communication with the State Nurses' Association can be invaluable in finding out what is happening in the state legislature.

The legislative committee should take its direction from current NSNA® resolutions, current state resolutions, health care issues, or specific bills. Select one or two targeted bills or issues for the coming year. Set realistic, achievable goals. The success of the legislative committee will be based on a track record of accomplishments. People will become involved and take note of the committee's achievements. Once you have selected the focus for the year, position papers can be drafted and submitted to the board of directors for endorsement.

## COMMUNICATIONS

A communication network with school chapters is vital if a state legislative program is to be effective. You may wish to adopt an alert system similar to the one used by NSNA ®. Another good idea is to send broadcast emails.

### WORKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

Identify the legislators that represent you at the state and national levels. Know their local office addresses and telephone numbers. For your federal legislators, you can get this information by going to the House and Senate web sites – [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) – and selecting the particular person on whom you're gathering information. Each state has a web site on which you can find the contact information for your state legislators. You can access most of them by going to [www.stateabbreviation.gov](http://www.stateabbreviation.gov).

You also can monitor your legislators' voting records through the internet. Contact their local offices -- they can tell you their position on specific items. Contact them when you support them in their decisions, as well as when you disagree.

It is also a good tactic to respond on issues other than nursing that affect you as citizens. If your legislator has a pet project that you support, let him/her know. Legislators will be that much more willing to listen when you need their assistance.

As an individual, get involved with your legislator's campaign. Working on campaigns increases your visibility and enhances your voice with your legislator. Campaigning enables you to become more familiar with your legislator's positions on health care topics as well as help shape your legislator's opinions.

#### Communicating with Your Legislator

A face-to-face meeting is the most effective way of communicating with your legislators. However, such meetings tend to be the exception and not the rule. What then are the other ways of communicating and what is their effectiveness? One caveat that applies no matter which method you choose – make sure you use a communication means that will get your opinion to your legislator *before* that vote needs to be taken.

For simplicity sake, the following information will be geared to your federal legislators. However, all of this information is transferable to your state legislators also.

Letters, faxes, and emails can be very effective when communicating with your legislator in influencing legis-

lators' views. These should be used as a response to a legislative alert from NSNA ® or the state association, or on an issue you have personal opinions about.

When communicating with your legislator remember to:

- Keep it brief – address only one issue in each letter; and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.
- Identify yourself – be sure your return address is on your letter, not only on the envelope. Envelopes normally get detached, discarded, or misplaced before the answer is written.
- Get to the point – state your purpose for writing in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H. R.\_\_\_\_, Senate bill: S.\_\_\_\_.
- Personalize it – include specific facts about how the bill will impact the legislator's district or state and why it is important to you.
- Ask your elected officials to explain their position on the issue in their reply so you do not get the typical form-letter response – "I'll keep your views in mind should this legislation come up for a vote." As a constituent, you are entitled to know why your Members of Congress think as they do.
- Thank your elected officials if they vote your way. They appreciate a compliment, and they remember positive feedback.
- Do not hesitate to state your displeasure. However, that, too, will be remembered, so be polite if your Members of Congress oppose your position. You will want their help on another issue on another day.

Using email:

- Email can be an easy and effective tool
- Avoid informal language – an email should be treated as seriously as a written letter
- Include your complete contact information

In a telephone call:

- Know the issue and your position.
- Prepare an outline so that you cover all major points in a short period of time.
- Expect that you will be asked to speak to a staff person and not the legislator.
- Follow up with a personal letter to the legislator, citing the name of the staff member with whom you spoke.

To find the telephone number, fax, or email address for Senators and Representatives use the internet (see Senate and House web sites: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)) or call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. When the operator answers, ask for your senators and representative by name and state..

Visits with legislators can take place in Washington, D.C., your state capital, or in the home district office. Make your appointment by letter or telephone well in advance and outline the issues you wish to discuss, along with any previous communication you have had. You may want to team up with other nursing students or nurses.

Some key points to remember for a visit are:

- Discuss only the essential issues -- set your priorities before you go in.
- Have specific recommendations for the legislator on these issues.
- Leave a brief written statement of the points you wish to make with your legislator and offer your help to provide additional information.
- Don't overstay or try to solve all your problems in one visit.
- Don't be upset if the legislator cannot make the meeting. Try to meet with his key staff member in the subject area instead.
- Follow up your visit with a personal letter expressing thanks and reiterating your major points.
- Offer resources on the subject.

Position papers are statements on a legislative issue to share with the legislators and others involved. They should be used for major concerns. To prepare a position paper on a bill or issue, the process should include: a summary of the substance of the bill or issue, the advantages or pro arguments, the disadvantages or con arguments, the legislative history, the likelihood of passage if it is a bill, and the recommended association position and action.

All position papers developed and endorsed by the board should be published and distributed to all members and state nursing organizations, and placed on the state association web site.

Testimony is the process by which special interest groups and consumers give information to a congressional committee while it is preparing or working on passage of a bill.

The preparation and representation of testimony is advanced legislative activism. Testimony is usually presented to a governmental committee in response to an invitation from that committee. Participation in public hearings also offers a spontaneous opportunity to present an association's statement. The activity requires close liaison with the state nurses' association and NSNA ®. The testimony must clearly address the issue, must be factual, should represent your association's views, and be as brief as possible.

#### **DO:**

- Be accurate. Spell names correctly and verify information.

Addressing Correspondence:  
To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)  
\_\_(Rm.#)\_\_(name of)Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
Dear Senator:

To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)  
\_\_(Rm.#)\_\_(name of)House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as:

Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:  
or  
Dear Mr. Speaker or Madam Speaker:

- Clearly identify the bill, using title, and number, if possible.
- Know about the issue or bill before you write.
- Identify yourself (occupation, hometown, member of NSNA ®).
- Use your own words on your own stationery.
- Be courteous, brief and to the point.
- Provide pertinent reasons for your stand.
- Write a letter of appreciation whenever the legislator does something that meets with your approval.
- Write letters at appropriate times; for example, when a bill is in committee, and again before it goes to the floor for a vote.

#### **DON'T:**

- Use threats or promises.
- Berate your legislator.
- Demand a commitment before the legislator has had time to consider the measure.
- Pretend to have vast influence in the political area.
- Be vague.

## **THE POWER OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Working with Congress is often newsworthy. Getting press coverage of your activity is a good way to give more public reinforcement to your legislator, stimulate community involvement in the issue, and reach potential members. Work with your state newsletter editor on public relations.

It is very important to let your members know what happened with an issue and the reasons for

success or failure. Your members should be thanked for their help.

## POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

These committees are political action arms of associations that do fundraising, make contributions to candidates, endorse candidates and educate members about the political process. The laws governing formation and operation of political action committees are formidable and the groups are carefully monitored by the Federal Election Commission for their political contributions.

ANA-PAC is the Political Action Committee of the American Nurses Association. A large part of nurses' political power comes through ANA-PAC. It serves as the vehicle through which nurses can collectively give money to candidates for the U.S. House and Senate. Through contributions ANA-PAC helps put friends of nurses into policy making positions. The Board of ANA-PAC endorses and contributes to federal candidates who meet the criteria set up by the ANA-PAC board. The ANA-PAC Board consists of five members appointed by the ANA Board of Directors and four members appointed by the ANA-PAC Board from the State Nurses' Association membership at large.

## NSNA Leadership U ®

Earn credit by  
Participating in the Legislation Education  
Committee

As an NSNA ® leader, you'll learn and practice important leadership skills by participating in the NSNA ® Legislation Education Program. The following may be helpful when approaching faculty to explore the possibility of having your NSNA ® participation partially fulfill course requirements or independent study elective. Use your course syllabus to see if you can meet the objectives with the following leadership activities.

### Leadership Activities

- Develop enhanced capacity for leadership;
- Develop personal vision for the future of the profession;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the complex role organizations play in the profession and in society.

### Learning Objectives

- Master the skills needed to set an agenda and to run a committee meeting;
- Present written and verbal reports of committee's deliberations to the Board of Directors

- and membership;
- Analyze legislative policy and regulatory issues related to nursing and healthcare and identify a plan to address these issues;
- Practice collaboration among peers.

Visit [www.nsnaleadershipu.org](http://www.nsnaleadershipu.org) for details.

## GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

*Act* – Legislation that has passed both legislative chambers and become law.

*Companion Bills* – Identical bills introduced separately in both chambers.

*Conference Committee* – Meeting between the two chambers when two versions of a similar bill have been passed by the House and Senate.

*Congressional Record* – Official transcript of the proceedings in Congress.

*Continuing Resolution* – A resolution enacted to allow specific Executive Branch agencies to continue operating even though funds have not been appropriated for them for the following fiscal year.

*Engrossed Bill* – Final copy of a bill including its amendments passed by either chamber. The bill is then delivered to the other chamber.

*Enrolled Bill* – Final copy of a bill that has passed both chambers in identical form.

*Filibuster* – Tactic used only in the Senate whereby a minority intentionally delays a vote through a series of long speeches.

*Fiscal Year* – Accounting year. For the federal government, the fiscal year (FY) is October 1 to September 30 of the following calendar year.

*Germane* – Having some relation to the bill in question. In the House all amendments must be germane.

*Hearings* – Committee sessions for hearing witnesses.

*Joint Committee* – Committee composed of members from both chambers.

*Joint Resolution* – Legislation similar to a bill that has the force of law if passed by both houses and signed by the President, generally used for special situations.

*Lame Duck* – Member of Congress (or the President) who has not been reelected but whose term

has not yet expired.

*Legislative Calendar* – Docket or list of measures reported from committees and ready for consideration on the floor.

*Lobbying* – The process of attempting to influence the passage, defeat, or content of legislation by individuals or a group other than Members of Congress.

*Marking Up a Bill* – Process, usually in committee, of analyzing a piece of legislation section-by-section and making changes.

*Override a Veto* – A two-thirds majority vote by both the House and Senate to set aside a Presidential veto of legislation.

*Public Law* – Designation used for legislation that has been passed by both chambers and signed by the President.

*Record Vote* – Vote in which Members of Congress indicate their vote orally for listing in the Congressional Record

*Rider* – A measure added to another, often unrelated, bill with the purpose of one piece of legislation passing on the strength of another.

*Roll Call Vote* – In the House, an oral vote for which a record is kept.

*Seniority* – Length of unbroken service, often used to determine rank in committees.

*Standing Committee* – A committee permanently provided for by House or Senate Rules.

*Supplemental Appropriation* – An appropriation to cover the difference between an agency's regular appropriation and the amount deemed necessary for it to operate for the full fiscal year.

*Third-Party Payment* – Refers to a source other than the individual or the provider that pays the health care expenses of an individual. Blue Cross, private insurance companies, Medicare and Medicaid are examples of "Third Party Payers."

*Whip* – Assistant leader for each party in each chamber who keeps other Members of the party informed of the legislative agenda of the leader. Also tracks sentiment among party Members for certain legislation and tries to persuade Members to be present and vote for measures important to the leadership.

## **Miscellaneous Terms Related to Nursing**

*Entry into Practice* – Refers to minimal education standards for licensure as a practitioner.

*HMO* – Health Maintenance Organization. is a prepaid membership enrollment organization that guarantees certain basic medical/health care services.

*Institutional Licensure* – A concept whereby institutions (hospitals, nursing homes) would license their personnel to practice. It is the direct opposite of the individual licensure concept now in use in nursing, with practice being regulated by nurse practice acts

*PAC* – A PAC is a "political action committee" which is separately incorporated and can endorse and make contributions to political candidates for elected government offices. For example, ANA-PAC is the political action committee of the American Nurses Association.

*Nurse Education Act* – Federal legislation that authorizes monies for student nurse loans, nursing school construction and institutional support grants, nurse practitioner and advanced training programs, and special projects and financial distress grants.

*Appropriations Bill* – Legislation that provides funds for authorized programs.

*Authorization Bill* – Legislation establishing a program and setting funding limits. Do not confuse with actual appropriations.

*Bill* – Legislation introduced in either chamber.

*Calendar* – List and schedule of bills to be considered by a committee.

*Clean Bill* – A bill that has been revised in mark-up. Amendments are assembled with unchanged language and the bill is referred to the floor with a new number.

*Cloture* – Method of limiting debate or ending a filibuster in the Senate. At least 60 Senators must vote in favor before cloture can be invoked.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

Aiken, Tonia D. (2004). 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, *Legal, ethical and political issues in nursing*. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis

Barry, Jan. (2000). *A Citizen's Guide to Grassroots*

*Campaigns*. New York: Rutgers University Press.

Capitol Update, The Legislative Newsletter for Nurses, by the American Nurses Association, Department of Governmental Affairs, Washington, DC. (Available Online Only)

DeLaney, Ann. (2002). *Politics For Dummies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition., Hoboken, New Jersey.

*Imprint* ®, The Publication for the National Student Nurses Association, published bimonthly by the National Student Nurses Association, New York.

Kennedy, John F. (1956). *Profiles in Courage*. New York: Harper.

Mason, Diana J., Mary W. Chaffee, and Leavitt, Judith K. (2002). *Policy and Politics in Nursing and Healthcare* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company.

Nicoll, Leslie H. (2001). *Nurses' Guide to the Internet*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

Policy, politics & nursing practice, A Nursing Periodical, published quarterly by Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

*Washington Information Directory*, Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1255 22<sup>nd</sup> St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC. 20037

*Nursing Education Policy Newsletter*, National League for Nursing [www.nln.org](http://www.nln.org)

Several state and federal government relations pamphlets are available from the League of Women Voters of the United States. Request their publication list.

Check your school and public libraries for useful resources, you would be surprised what a "nursing and politics" or "nursing and legislation" search will find!

## IMPORTANT INTERNET RESOURCES

### *Nursing & Health Professions Legislative Resources*

American Association of Legal Nurse Consult-

ants

### **[www.aalnc.org](http://www.aalnc.org)**

The AALNC promotes the professional advancement of registered nurses consulting within the legal arena by providing a forum for education and exchange of information.

American Nurses Association Legislative Resources

### **[www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org)**

Resources Available:

Capitol Update

Federal Advocacy

RN Activist Tool Kit

News/ Action Alerts

Political Action Committee

State Government Affairs

National League for Nursing Government Affairs Resources

### **[www.nln.org](http://www.nln.org)**

Resources Available:

Government Affairs Action Center

Facts and Figures

Nursing Education Policy E-Newsletter

Public Policy Agenda

Statements and Letters

HRSA-funded Health Workforce Information Center

**<http://www.healthworkforceinfo.org/>**

Institute of Medicine

**[www.iom.edu](http://www.iom.edu)**

National Student Nurses Association Legislative Resources

### **[www.nsnaleadershipu.org/](http://www.nsnaleadershipu.org/)**

### **[www.nsna.org/pubs/pieces/index.asp](http://www.nsna.org/pubs/pieces/index.asp)**

Resources Available:

*Getting the Pieces to Fit* NSNA ® Handbook for school and State Associations

Awards and Honors Booklet

NSNA ® Resolutions

Code of Ethics

Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Nursing Students

Guidelines Booklets for Planning NSNA ® Activities

### *Professional Nursing Organization Resource Lists*

Student Nursing State Associations Web Ad-

State Nurses Associations Web Addresses

[www.nursingworld.org/Functionalmenucategories/AboutANA/WhoWeAre/CMA.aspx](http://www.nursingworld.org/Functionalmenucategories/AboutANA/WhoWeAre/CMA.aspx)

Social Security Administration

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

THOMAS – Legislative Information on the Internet  
(U.S. Congress)

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

US House of Representatives

[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

US Senate

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

White House

[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

This site provides current information on the President, Vice President, and their spouses. Its focus is to provide information on current presidential news and policy focuses.

### *Political Organization Resource List*

American League of Lobbyists

[www.alldc.org](http://www.alldc.org)

The American League of Lobbyists is a nonprofit membership organization ([www.alldc.org/membership.htm](http://www.alldc.org/membership.htm)) dedicated to the advancement of the lobbying profession.

Democratic National Committee

[www.democrats.org/index.html](http://www.democrats.org/index.html)

League of Women Voters

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

National Women's Political Caucus

[www.nwpc.org](http://www.nwpc.org)

The purpose of the National Women's Political Caucus is to increase women's participation in the political process and to identify, recruit, train and support pro-choice women for election and appointment to public office.

Republican National Committee

[www.rnc.org](http://www.rnc.org)

### *Organizational Leadership Resources*

American Society of Association Executives

[www.asaenet.org/main](http://www.asaenet.org/main)

ASAE is considered the advocate for the nonprofit sector. The society is dedicated to advancing the value of voluntary associations to society and supporting the professionalism of the individuals who lead them.

US Chamber of Commerce

[www.uschamber.org](http://www.uschamber.org)

*Voter Registration Information*

Foundation of the NSNA

[www.nсна.org/Foundation](http://www.nсна.org/Foundation)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

[www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)

### *Helpful Search Engines for Legislative Information*

FirstGov

[www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov)

This is the official United States Government search engine that allows you to search more than 51 million international, national, state, and local government web pages.

Google

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

### *Government Resources*

Bureau of Health Professionals

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/dsa>

Resources Available:

Nursing

Public Health

Financial Resources: Grants, Student Assistance, and Health Service Corps

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Occupation Outlook

Handbook: Registered Nurse

<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos083.htm>

This site provides information on the work registered nurses perform, current working conditions, training and other required job qualifications, advancement opportunities, job outlook, job earning, and information about related occupations.

Census Bureau  
[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Formerly: *Health Care Financing Administration*  
[www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)

Resources Available:  
Medicare  
Medicaid  
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)

Consumer Product Safety Commission  
[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

Department of Commerce  
[www.doc.gov](http://www.doc.gov)

Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.dhhs.gov](http://www.dhhs.gov)

### ***Other Government Resources:***

Administration on Aging (AOA) [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)  
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)  
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) [www.atsdr.cdc.gov](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [www.hcfa.gov](http://www.hcfa.gov)  
Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)  
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)  
Division of Nursing - <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing>  
Indian Health Service (IHS) [www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH) [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)  
Program Support Center (PSC) [www.psc.gov](http://www.psc.gov)  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

Department of Justice  
[www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)

Electoral College  
[www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/electoral\\_college/votes\\_index.html](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/votes_index.html)

Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

Food and Drug Administration  
[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

National Transportation Safety Board  
<http://www.nts.gov>

Office of Minority Health  
[www.omhrc.gov](http://www.omhrc.gov)  
Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards (CLAS Standards) for health care; expanding diversity in the health professions

### ***NSNA JOINS NURSING COMMUNITY AND AMERICANS FOR NURSING SHORTAGE RELIEF TO ADVOCATE TO CONGRESS***

NSNA is pleased to be participating with other national nursing organizations as part of *The Nursing Community* and the *Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR)* in 2009-2010. ANSR, a consortium of over 54 nursing organizations and supporters of nursing issued a Consensus Document to advise legislators and members about concerns to nurses and nursing students in 2009-2010 and beyond. The Legislation/Education Committee has posted a copy of the *Nursing Community Letter to Congress*, the *ANSR Consensus Document*, and the *ANSR One-Pager on Health Reform* that NSNA has signed on-to as a supporting organization based on positions established by the NSNA House of Delegates over the past ten years.

The NSNA 2009-2010 Legislation/Education Committee encourages you to review these documents at [www.nсна.org/activities/legislation.asp](http://www.nсна.org/activities/legislation.asp) for your information and advocacy.

# National Student Nurses' Association, Inc. ®

## Legislation Education Committee

### Planning and Implementing A Voter Registration Campaign

It is our duty and right as United States citizens to vote and it is our obligation as future professionals to monitor health and public assistance programs, funding for nursing education, and equal rights for all citizens of the United States. A good way to begin cultivating political awareness is by participating in the electoral process. The nursing profession has developed political savvy and legislators listen to us. Legislators will pay closer attention to us when we can demonstrate that nurses and nursing students are showing up at the polls.

Voter registration opportunities expanded significantly with passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. This act, also referred to as the "Motor Voter," allows people to register to vote when they apply for or renew a driver's license. In addition, the Act requires states to offer voter registration to citizens at state-funded service agencies (i.e. food stamp and Medicaid offices), unemployment compensation offices, public schools and public libraries. All states must also accept and use the mail-in voter registration forms. Go to [http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/nvra/activ\\_nvra.php](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/nvra/activ_nvra.php) for more information on the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

The National Student Nurses' Association 1983 House of Delegates mandated that NSNA urge nursing students to be registered voters and exercise their right to vote. To support this resolution NSNA encourages its constituents to designate a week in September as NSNA's ® Voter Registration Week.

The voter registration, education and get-out-the-vote campaign (VR/ED/GOTV) is designed to help students at their schools of nursing conduct a voter registration drive. This drive is not limited to registering nursing students; all non-registered eligible people should be included. NSNA is asking that students from every school of nursing throughout the country conduct a VR/ED/GOTV campaign for one week in September. You can designate the week that is best to run your drive, keeping in mind that voter registration deadlines and procedures can vary from state to state and township to township.

This manual outlines the following nine steps for

organizing a VR/ED/GOTV drive:

- Join a campus coalition.
- Learn the voter registration procedure.
- Plan the drive.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Publicize the event.
- Conduct a voter registration drive.
- Educate new registrants.
- Get-Out-the-Vote.
- Evaluate your success.

### Step 1: Join a campus coalition

Check with your student government on campus and find out if there is a school voter registration drive already planned. If so, coordinate your efforts with the drive so that the campaign can be intensified, dates for the drive are coordinated, and publicity for the drive enhanced. This is a good opportunity for nursing students to take a leadership role and to participate with other disciplines on a project that cuts across professional and political boundaries. If there is a Public Interest Research Group on your campus, contact them to find out if they are planning a student voter registration drive on campus.

Just a reminder, if your group does participate in a campus voter registration drive, do not overlook your main objective— that is to register as many nursing students to vote as possible.

### Step 2: Learn the voter registration procedure

Each state has its own laws about who may register and vote. All states require that voters be United States citizens by birth or naturalization to register to vote in federal and state elections. Voters cannot be registered to vote in more than one place at a time. This particular point is important since students who live at school using a temporary address may need to register using their permanent address and then request an absentee ballot if they are unable to go to their polling place on election day. Students with a permanent address out-of-state may use the national registration form. Students who are attending school in their home state must use the state form. State Election Offices can supply both the national and state forms. State Election Offices are generally located in your state's capital and the number can be obtained from the phone book or directory assis-

tance.

Information about the voter registration process, and registration deadlines can be obtained from your State Election Office. Go to <http://www.eac.gov/voter/how-to-contact-your-state-election-office> for contact information.

### Step 3: Plan the drive

You will need to form a committee of nursing students (and perhaps a faculty representative) to implement the drive and to see it through to completion. A suggested committee model consists of five persons: a chairperson and four others responsible for various tasks including researching the state/local laws; recruiting volunteers; planning and implementing publicity for the project; and financial planning for the project. The following guidelines will help committee members understand their responsibilities.

The chairperson is responsible for writing up the plan with committee members, assigning tasks, keeping the project on schedule, and maintaining communication with the committee members, other groups (especially if the committee is part of a coalition), key faculty members, and others as necessary.

The person responsible for determining the registration process can begin by finding out if there are other voter registrations drives on campus (or in an affiliated hospital if the school is hospital-based). If there is, it is possible that the voter registration information has already been obtained. If not, this committee member will have to contact the state or local election authorities and find out how to register students on campus and will be responsible for recommending the best way to proceed. This could mean obtaining an adequate supply of forms, finding volunteers to be deputized, or coordinating the process with local election officials to have registration on campus. The State Election Office can assist you with information and additional resources to help you determine the procedure for your location.

The committee member responsible for volunteers would see that the appropriate number of volunteers are recruited (the number will be determined by the anticipated number of registrants and the registration procedure); that the volunteers are trained; and that the volunteers participate in the actual event. Training should include the following points:

The non-partisan nature of voter registration drives. The voting procedure:

- A thorough understanding of the information required on the registration form. It is important

to go over all aspects of the form so that volunteers can answer registrants' questions.

- Know the date, time and place of the event and arrive early enough to assist in setting up necessary tables and materials.

The committee member responsible for publicity will be responsible for having flyers made; distributing flyers and posting them around campus; placing announcements in the school and local newspapers, local TV and radio stations. After the drive, this person may also help coordinate the voter education and Get-out-the-Vote campaign.

The committee member responsible for financial planning will plan the budget and make recommendations for financing the project. The drive should be inexpensive to implement if it is well thought-out and uses available resources (or pools resources with other groups). Follow-up for voter education and Get-out-the-Vote will add postage and printing to the budget. Reproduction of flyers can also be expensive. If refreshments are provided on the day the voter registration drive takes place, this will be an added expense.

Local NSNA chapters, local nurses' and alumni associations may also help with funding. Use your imagination and ask local merchants to help by donating goods or services and then recognize them in some special way for giving their support. For example, at the end of the drive, you may want to hold a ceremony to recognize those who helped and express your gratitude to them for making the campaign a success.

Planning is the key to success. The plan must be well thought-out, step by step, and each task outlined with a deadline for completion. Right at the onset, consider the following in your plan:

- What are we going to do (goal)?
- Who is going to do what (task assignment)?
- How are we going to accomplish each task (plan)?
- Where will the activity take place (site)?
- When are we going to have this activity (date and time)?
- How much will it cost (finances)?

Your voter registration drive should be conducted in a highly populated area of the campus. The student union, cafeteria, dormitory, or site of a special activity (such as the football stadium during a Saturday game) are excellent locations to set up your table. Be sure to check with school authorities to determine if the location is suitable and not in violation of fire or emergency codes. You may even want to con-

sider having an event in conjunction with your drive such as a dance, guest speaker, concert or other popular campus activity. Make the voter registration drive fun for all who participate!

It is also important to obtain permission in writing from the appropriate school authorities before planning your drive and any associated events.

#### **Step 4: Recruit volunteers**

Before recruiting volunteers you will need to set up a timetable with the hours the registration drive will be in operation and the number of volunteers you will need. The following ideas can help you to recruit committed volunteers for your drive.

The National Education Association (NEA) points out three reasons why people volunteer for political action:

1. *For social reasons.* It's essentially the same reason why people volunteer for any association activity. A VR/ED/GOTV drive is a social event, a chance to meet and be with people. It's fun ☐☐ or it should be. If your drive doesn't combine work with fun, don't expect volunteers to flock to the project.

2. *To escape.* "Getting away from it all" is a need most people have. Even volunteers who must work at home enjoy the "escape" of doing something different. VR/ED/GOTV drives offer volunteers an interesting diversion and a change of pace.

3. *For a belief.* Volunteers sign up because they believe in the right and responsibilities of each citizen to vote. Whatever the spur, your drive must have one in order to attract volunteers.

When volunteers begin to fade away, it's a sure sign that something's wrong with the drive. NEA research and experience show that volunteers require certain things in order to keep them involved:

A clear, specific, manageable job

A good reason for having to do it

- ★ The tools to get it done
- ★ Proper training
- ★ Written directions
- ★ Good working conditions
- ★ A deadline
- ★ A report to make
- ★ Recognition and appreciation.

Most volunteers mean what they say. You ask them

to help, they say yes, and they mean it. They expect to work. But their commitment will only last as long as the drive presents a sensible, purposeful, organized, interesting activity. Fleeing volunteers are always a symptom, not the cause of a poor drive.

It is essential that the drive be planned and organized before volunteers are recruited. Prepare a written script for the people who are recruiting volunteers which includes specific information about where, when and what is expected of the volunteers in addition to the reason why their help is needed.

If a person volunteers once they are more likely to volunteer again. In fact, the likelihood of future participation increases with each time they volunteer, provided they feel that they have made a valuable contribution.

Training is essential for effective use and retention of volunteers. You may want to train volunteers at a session before the actual day(s) the volunteers work, or shortly before they conduct the registration or GOTV activities.

In either case, include motivational information, written directions, and encourage them to ask questions. Review the materials they will be using with them and prepare a packet which includes:

- Summary of registration laws, requirements and procedures.
- Non-partisan nature of the drive.
- Flyers.
- Message to be used when talking with potential registrants.
- A list of answers to frequently asked questions.
- Registration forms and instructions for completion of forms.
- Name tags.
- Report and/or evaluation form.

Keep lists of those who worked which include names, addresses and phone numbers and the date they worked. Send thank you letters to all volunteers.

#### **Step 5: Publicize the event**

At least two weeks in advance, publicize the date, time and place your organization will be holding the voter registration drive. Make use of the media that are already available to you, such as local and school newspapers, TV and radio stations. Make announcements in class, hang posters, hand out flyers and wear buttons. Good publicity will be the key to your success.

#### **Step 6: Conduct a voter registration drive**

The three elements of a successful registration drive are: information, motivation and accessibility to the registration process. Many people are not registered simply because they are not sure how, when, and where to do it. Providing this information will increase registration.

Motivation means delivering a message which includes reasons why someone should register. Cynicism and apathy are common among unregistered voters, and many may feel that their vote does not make a difference. Point out that many elections have been won by a small number of votes and give an example of a recent, local election. Tell them that one vote may not always make a difference but if the more than 200,000 nursing students voted it would definitely make a difference.

The final element in the drive is providing accessibility to the registration process. Obviously, postcard registration enables you to easily link up the process with the person. Registering the person while she/he is motivated is crucial. Get the person to fill out the registration form immediately.

Check every form before turning forms into the elections office and make certain that all information has been provided. Keep a list of every person the drive registers. Record name, address and phone number. You will need this information for your education and Get-Out-the-Vote campaign. Have blank postcards available when registering voters. Have the new registrant fill out name and address on the front of the postcard and use this postcard for one of your follow-up mailings. This will save you time and assure that the new registrant receives a follow-up notice from your group.

### **Step 7: Educate new registrants**

Voter registration and get out the vote campaigns must be nonpartisan. Note the following guidelines (from "A Basic Guide to the Political Rules Affecting Non-profit Organizations," Gregory L. Covin and Lowell Finley, San Francisco, CA, June 1995):

"...This means that it must be designated solely to educate the public about the importance of voting and must not evidence any bias for or against any candidate or party. You can stimulate people to participate in the drive by mentioning the critical issues involved in the election, so long as their presentation of those issues doesn't indicate you are trying to exploit a "fault line" between the candidates. For instance, targeting low-income, minority, low-turnout homeless or student populations is acceptable. Targeting based on party affiliation, past voting preferences, or close races is not."

Remember, the more often new registrants receive a

message encouraging them to vote, the greater the chances that they will. Studies show that new registrants have higher turnout than established voters. The last thing you should say to the new registrant is, "Vote on November \_\_\_\_."

### **Step 8: Get-Out-the-Vote**

Turning out the voters who have never voted or have fallen out of the habit is not an easy task. However, if the newly registered voters don't vote, all your hard work will not produce meaningful results. Election day activities such as knocking on new voters' doors, using public address systems in neighborhoods where voters live, providing baby-sitting and transportation services, holding signs on neighborhood street corners and passing out flyers door-to-door and at bus stops, will increase turnout.

Good record keeping is essential to successful Get-Out-the-Vote activities. Keep a list of names, addresses and phone numbers of new voters. Mailings are the easiest method of following up with new voters. Combine educational and motivational information in a one-page letter shortly after registration. Use the postcard obtained during the registration drive. Send a second letter designed to arrive approximately one week before election day with information on why, where, when, and how to vote or call voters with this message. Follow up with a phone call on election eve or election day. Campaigns will frequently assist with mailings and phone calls. You should be willing, however, to recruit volunteers to work on these projects or in the campaign in return for assistance or the use of facilities.

Before the election, place signs around your school reminding students when to vote. Also, since many students may not live in the districts where they attend school, have information available on voting by absentee ballot, and encourage these students to obtain this while home on break.

Frequently, the same volunteers who registered new voters will participate in the GOTV activities. This is especially true if you explain the importance of participating in both phases when you recruit them. The new registrants are also a source of volunteers; get them to commit themselves at the time of registration.

### **Step 9: Evaluate your success**

There are several ways to measure the success of your VR/ED/GOTV drive. First, did you reach your goal for the number of registrants? Keep notes as to the site used, successful methods of recruiting volunteers, and note what you would do differently.

## VOTER REGISTRATION GET-OUT-THE-VOTE EVALUATION

Please photocopy and return completed form to NSNA. Please fill out this form following your voter registration drive and get-out-the-vote campaign. Your school will receive a certificate acknowledging your participation.

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
NO. STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of voter registration driver(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of volunteers \_\_\_\_\_

4. Number of registrants \_\_\_\_\_

5. Number of nursing students registered \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach copies of publicity materials you used (i.e., posters, press releases).

List any special events that took place with your drive: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cost of drive \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Where did drive(s) take place? \_\_\_\_\_

If you had any problems with election officials, please note them here and explain how you solved or overcame them:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you telephone new registrants reminding them to vote? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Did you send new registrants a letter reminding them to vote? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

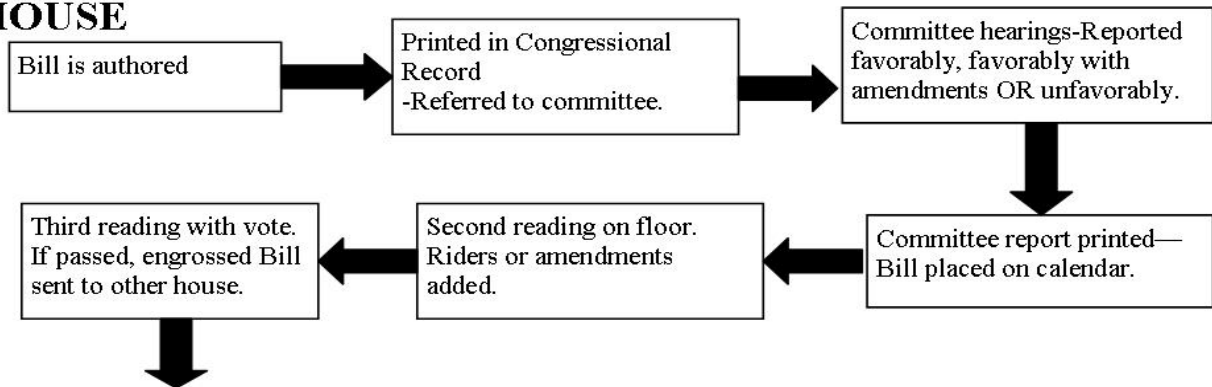
Number of new registrants : \_\_\_\_\_

How was the count done? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: National Student Nurses' Association ®, 45 Main Street, Suite 606, Brooklyn, NY 11201,  
or FAX (718) 797-1186

# HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

## HOUSE



## SENATE

