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NEWS RELEASE



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**ANA STATEMENT ON SENATOR JOHN McCAIN'S HEALTH CARE PLAN DURING
COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK**

SILVER SPRING, MD – Senator John McCain unveiled his health care policy during a speech in Tampa, Florida Tuesday, April 29th. The American Nurses Association (ANA) believes it is more important than ever to recognize health care is a basic human right, and that everyone in the U.S. should have access to high quality, affordable care. While the ANA concurs with Senator McCain's emphasis on the importance of increasing quality and controlling costs, his health care platform is based on the idea that our health care system can be reformed through competition in the marketplace.

ANA contends that two decades of market based reform has only resulted in a health care system that continues to be fragmented and costly. While some individuals have access to a sophisticated system of care, for many others this same system is characterized by high costs, inconsistent quality, and unequal distribution of services.

“Nearly 50 million Americans are without health insurance, and many millions more are under insured, with plans grossly inadequate for their needs. With this week marking Cover the Uninsured Week; it is the perfect time for Senator McCain to recognize these facts and to address them in his health care plan. Senator McCain's emphasis on Health Savings Accounts would shift more of the costs onto the individuals. These plans ignore individuals and families who do not already have health insurance, and discourage primary and preventative care,” said ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR.

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ANA has long advocated that many pressing health care needs go unmet or underserved due to restricted consumer access, an overemphasis on acute care, and an orientation toward treatment, at the expense of prevention and wellness. ANA believes that too much money is spent on expensive secondary and tertiary care and not enough is spent on primary care.

The nursing profession is the largest group of health care providers in this country, as such, we are well positioned to advocate on behalf of and in concert with, individuals, families and communities who are in desperate need of a well-financed, functional, and coordinated health care system that provides safe, high quality care in a cost effective manner. Working together- policy makers, industry leaders, providers and consumers- we can build an affordable health care system that meets the needs of everyone.

At a time when this country is facing a critical nursing shortage, one that threatens to impact the quality of health care, it is imperative that lawmakers address the need to improve working conditions for nurses. Congress must resolve to pass legislation that will support the education, recruitment and retention of more registered nurses to serve America and its expanding health needs.

The ANA supports The Registered Nurse Safe Staffing Act (HR 4138/S. 73), which would hold hospitals accountable for the development of valid, reliable unit by unit nurse staffing plans to assure patient safety. A coordinated plan, requiring input from direct patient care registered nurses (RNs) would be based on each hospital unit's unique characteristics and patient needs. The bill also would make nurse staffing information available to the public, and includes whistleblower protections for RNs and others who want to file a complaint regarding potential harm to patients as a result of inadequate staffing.

Research demonstrates that appropriate registered nurse staffing – requiring both the number and skill level of nurses to provide safe care -- improves patient outcomes. More RN hours per patient day are associated with decreased length of patient stay. Cost savings resulting from decreased length of stay would largely benefit the payer.

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ANA also supports the Medicaid Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) and Physician Assistant (PA) Access Act (H.R. 2066/S. 59) which removes legal barriers that prevent Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) from fully participating in the Medicaid program. ANA believes this legislation is vital to increasing access to care for low-income Americans. APRNs provide cost-effective, high quality care, and are often willing to provide services in rural and inner city areas where access to physicians is limited. ANA affirms that passing this legislation would go a long way toward providing the affordable and available health care the President himself insists is 'required' for a future of hope and opportunity.

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The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses through its 54 constituent member nurses associations. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

